The Nature of

APOSTASIE

From the Profession of the GOSPEL,

AND THE

Punishment of APOSTATES

DECLARED,

IN AN

Exposition of *Heb.* 6. 4, 5, 6.

WITH

An Enquiry into the Causes and Reasons of the Decay of the Power of Religion in the World; or the present general Defection from the Truth, Holiness, and Worship of the GOSPEL.

ALSO,

Of the Proneness of Churches and Persons of all sorts unto APOSTASIE.

With Remedies and Means of *Prevention.*

By *John Owen*, D. D.

John 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures.*

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE READERS.

SOME *brief Account of the Occaſion and deſign of the enſuing Diſcourſe, I judg due unto the* Reader, *that upon a proſpect of them, he may either proceed in its peruſal, or deſiſt as he ſhall ſee cauſe.*

That the ſtate of Religion is at this day deplorable in moſt parts of the Chriſtian World, is acknowledged by all, who concern themſelves in any thing that is ſo called. Yea the Enormities of ſome are come to that exceſs that others publickly complain of them, who without the Countenance of their more bold Provocations would themſelves be judged no ſmall part or cauſe of the Evils to be complained of. However this on all hands will as I ſuppoſe be agreed unto, that among the generality of profeſſed Chriſtians, the Glory and Power of Chriſtianity are faded and almoſt utterly loſt; though the Reaſons and Cauſes thereof are not agreed upon. For however ſome few may pleaſe themſelves, in ſuppoſing nothing to be wanting unto a good ſtate of things in Religion, but only ſecurity in what they

are and enjoy, yet the whole World is so evidently filled with the dreadful effects of the Lusts of men, and sad tokens of Divine Dispeasure, that all things from above and here below, proclaim the Degeneracy of our Religion in its profession, from its Pristine Beauty and Glory. Religion is the same that ever it was, only it suffers by them that make Profession of it. Whatever disadvantage it falls under in the World, they must at length answer for, in whose misbelief and practice it is corrupted. And no man can express a greater enmity unto, or malice against the Gospel, than he that should assert or maintain, that the Faith, Profession, Lives, Ways and Walkings of the generality of Christians are a just Representation of its Truth and Holiness. The description, which the Apostle gives of men in their principles, dispositions and actings, before there hath been any effectual influences on their minds and lives from the Light, Power, and Grace of the Gospel, is much more applicable unto them, than any thing that is spoken of the Disciples of Christ in the whole book of God. Foolish are they, & disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful and hating one another. *The way, paths and footsteps of Gospel-Faith, Love, Meekness, Temperance, Selfdenyal, Benignity, Humility, Zeal and Contempt of the World, in the Honours, Profits and*

and Pleasures of it, with readiness for the Cross, are all overgrown, and almost worn out amongst men, that they can hardly be discerned where they have been. But in their stead the works of the flesh have made a broad and open Road that the multitude travel in; which though it may be right for a season in their own Eyes, yet is it the way to Hell, and goeth down to the Chambers of Death. For these works of the flesh are manifest in the World, not only in their nature what they are, but in their open perpetration and dismal effects; such are Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders, Drunkeness, Revellings, and such-like, *as they are reckoned up by the Apostle. How these things have spread themselves over the face of the Christian World among all sorts of persons, is manifest beyond all contradiction or pretence to the contrary. And that so it should come to pass in the* later times *is both expressly and frequently foretold in the Scripture, as in the ensuing discourse will be more fully declared.*

Many indeed there are who are not given up in the course of their lives unto the open practice of such Abominations. And therefore in that grand Defection from the Truth and Holiness of the Gospel which is so provalent in the World, The Grace of God is greatly to be admired, even in the small remainders

of Piety, Sobriety, and Modesty, and commonll se-fulnes's that are yet left among us. But those openly flagitious courses are not the only way whereby men may fall of from, and even renounce the Power Grace and Wisdon of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For even of those, who will not run out into the same exces's of riot with other men, the most are so ignorant of the Mysteries of the Gospel, so negligent or formal in divine Worship, so infected with Pride, Vanity and Love of the World, so regardles's of the Glory of Christ, and Honour of the Gospel, that it is no easie thing to find Christian Religion in the midest of profes'sed Christians, or the Power of Godlines's among them who openly avow the Forme thereof.

By this means is Christianity brought into so great neglect in the World, that its great and subtle Adversarie seems encouraged to attempt the ruining of its very foundations, that the name of it should no more be had in remembrance. For whereever Religion is taken of from a solid consistency by its Power in the lives and minds of men, when it hath no other Tenure but an outward unenlivened Profession, and the secular interest of it Professors, it will not long abide the shock of that Opposition which it is continually exposed unto. And whilst things are in this state, those, who seem to have any concernment therein, are so ingaged in mutual charging one another with being Occasions thereof, mostly on

on such Principles of Difference in Judgment as have no considerable influence thereinto, as that a joynt endeavour after proper Remedies is utterly neglected.

And there is yet another Consideration rendring the present state of Christian Religion in the World yet more deplorable. The only Principle of Evangelical Obedience is sacred Truth, and our Faith therein. That alone is the Doctrine which is according to Godliness, *and all acceptable Obedience unto God is the* Obedience of Faith. *Whatever men do or pretend unto in a way of Duty unto him, whereof the Truth of the Gospel is not the spring and measure, which is not guided and animated thereby, it is not what God at present requireth, nor what he will eternally reward. Wherefore although men may, and multitudes do, under a profession of that Truth live in open Rebellion against its Power; yet the wounds of Religion are not incurable, nor its stains indelible, whilst the proper Remedy is owned, & wants only due Application. But if this Truth it self be corrupted or deserted, if its most glorious Mysteries be abused or despised, and if its most important Doctrines be impeached of Error and False-hood, if the vain Imaginations and carnal Reasonings of the serpentine wits of men be substituted in their Room, or exalted above them, what hope is there of a Recovery? the breach will grow like the Sea, until there*

be none to heal it. If the fountaines of the Waters of the Sanctuary be poisoned in their first rising, they will not heal the Nations unto whom they come. Where the Doctrine of Truth is corrupted, the hearts of men will not be changed by it, nor their lives reformed.

How all this hath come to pass in the Apostacy of the Roman Church, and what Multitudes of professed Christians are carryed down the Stream of that Defection, is acknowledged among us who are called Protestants. *How therein by various Degrees the corruption of the Doctrine of the Gospel gave Occasion unto the Depravation of mens manners on the one hand, and the Wickedness of mens lives on the other hand led the way unto and served to make necessary a further perverting of the Doctrine it self, until at length it is hard to determine, whether the multiplied Errors of that Church have made the Reintroduction of true Holiness and Evangelical Obedience, or the corrupt worldly Conversation of the generality of the members of its Communion, have rendred the Restauration of Truth more difficult & unpracticable in their present station, is in part declared in the ensuing discourses, and deserves yet a more particular and distinct enquiry into. In general certain it is, that as Error with Superstition on the one hand in the minds of the Teachers or Guides of the Church, and Sin with Conformity unto the ways manners & course of the present*

present evil World in the Body of the People, were mutually assistant unto their joynt Introduction into the Profession and Lives of Christians; so having possessed themselves of the visible Church-state of many Nations, they are so interwoven in their interests, as to be mutually assistant to the exclusion of that Truth and Holiness which they have dispossessed. And whereas moreover they have found out the pretence of Infallibility, stretched wide enough in their own apprehensions, to cover patronize and justify the most enormous Errors, and highest inconformity of Life unto the Gospel, all hopes of their recovery are utterly defeated, but what are placed on the Soveraign Grace and Almighty Power of God.

That there is also another Endeavour of the same kind, and for the same general end, namely to corrupt the Doctrine of the Gospel, though in another way, and unto another extreme, vigorously carried on in the World by the Socinians, *and those who either absolutely or for the most part comply with them in their pernicious ways, is no less known, nor ought to be much less bewailed. For this Endeavour also is attended with many Advantages to give it success. The Corruption of the Doctrine of the Gospel in the* Roman Church, *as it sprang out of the Ignorance, Darkness, Superstition and carnal Affections of the minds of men; so it is by the same means preserved. But although those things in those Ages and places, where they abounded,*

gave.

gave ſufficient and effectuall Advantage to its gradual Introduction, and although the Principles of it be now ſo inlaid with the ſecular intereſts of the generality of mankind in moſt of the Nations of Europe, as to ſecure its ſtation & poſſeſſions, yet in that Emancipation of Reaſon from under the bond of Superſtition & Tradition, in that liberty of Rational Enquiry unto the true nature and cauſes of all things, in that refuſal to captivate their underſtandings in Religion to the bare Authority of men no wiſer than themſelves, which all pretend unto at preſent, who dare venture on an ordinary converſe in the World; it may ſeem marvellous how it ſhould get ground, and enlarge its Teritories, unleſs it be among them, who are evidently bought off from themſelves and from under the conduct of their own minds by ſome outward Advantages, which they look upon as a valuable conſideration. The true Reaſons hereof are enquired into in the enſuing diſcourſe. But this new Attempt, deſpiſing the baſled Aids of Superſtition and carnal Affections, which were in former Ages predominant and effectual, take ſhelter under a pretence of Reaſon, and the ſuitableneſs of what is propoſed in it, unto the natural Light and underſtandings of men. Whatever there is or is not in this matter, of the Relation that is between Religion and Reaſon, yet this being grown through the encreaſe of Learning and Converſe, with a decay of the true fear of God, the very Idol of this Age; whoever will pre-

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pare a ſacrifice unto it, though it be of the moſt Holy Myſteries of the Goſpel, he ſhall not fail of good entertainment and applauſe. And whoever ſhall refuſe to caſt incenſe on its Altar, ſhall be ſure to be exploded, as one that profeſſeth himſelf to be a fool, & even a Common enemy unto mankind. Tell men that there are ſome things in Religion that are above Reaſon, as it is finite and limited, and ſome things contrary unto it, as it is deprav'd and corrupted, and they will reply (what is true in it ſelf but wofully abuſ'd) that yet their Reaſon is the beſt, yea only means, which they have to judg of what is true or falſe. The Liberty of mens own Rational Faculties having got the great vogue in the World, (as indeed it is that which is moſt excellent therein of what is merely in and of it,) it is fond to expect that it ſhould not meet with a pernitious abuſe, as every thing that hath any worth in it, hath always done, when advanced unto ſuch a Reputation as might render it liable thereunto. For no man will ever adventure to pervail himſelf of that which others have no reſpect unto, or do deſpiſe. Herein then lies the advantage of this ſort of men, the Socinians *I mean & their adherents, in attempting to corrupt the Doctrine of the Goſpel, & hereon depends all their ſucceſs therein. Firſt they get the advantage of the ground in general, by pretending to reduce all men unto right Reaſon as the juſt meaſure and ſtandard of Truth. Put in any exceptions unto this propoſal,*

endeavour

endeavour to affix its bounds and proper measures, offer the consideration of Divine Revelation in its proper use and place, and you give away the cause among the many, who design at least to come in as common sharers in the Reputation that Reason hath got above all things in the World. By the confident use of this Artifice, and the most absurd application of this Principle unto things Infinite, and the most Holy mysteries of Divine Revelation; have this sort of men, otherwise for the most part as weak and insufficient in their reasonings, as their predecessors in the like attempts, got the Reputation of the most rational handlers of sacred things. And when, being harnessed with this Advantage, they proceed to the proposal of their opinions in particular, they have such an interest beforehand in the minds of men by nature, and have things so disposed and prepared for their Reception, that it is no wonder if oftimes they obtain success. For they are all of them designed unto one of those two Heads. First that there is no Reason why we should believe any thing that Reason cannot comprehend, so that we may safely conclude, that whatever is above our Reason is contrary unto it, and for what is so, it is destructive to the very natural Constitution of our Souls not to reject. And secondly that the mind of Man is in its present condition every way sufficient unto the whole of its duties both Intellectual and Moral, with respect unto God, and to answer

ſwer whatever is required of us. Upon the matter they pretend only to undertake the patronage of humane Nature, and the common Reaſon and Honeſty of mankind, againſt thoſe imputations of weakneſs depravations and corruption in things Spiritual, wherewith by ſome it is charged and defamed. And although it be contrary unto the univerſal experience of the whole World, yet might this deſign be allowed what commendation men pleaſe, ſo that the defence of Nature were not undertaken expreſly againſt the Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Redemption that is in his blood, and the whole Myſterie of the Goſpel. But whereas it is a part of the Depravation of our Nature not to diſcover its own Depravations, and all thoſe opinions are ſuited to give it Countenance againſt what it is not ſenſible of, and whereof it is not willing to own the charge, it is no wonder if with very many they receive a ready entertainment. And whereas they ſeem to intereſt men in that Reputation, which Reaſon in the things of God had obtained in the World, and thereby to countenance them in the contempt of others as weak and irrational, things pleaſing to the depraved minds of men, it is more than probable that they will make a pernitious progreſs in one degree or another. So doth the ſubtle Enemy of our Salvation make his advantage of the diſpoſition, inclination and ſtate of every Age and Seaſon. Without his Interpoſition, Devotion of old might

have

have been carried on without Superſtition, & in this Age the uſe of Reaſon might be vindicated, without a rejection of the neceſſity of ſupernatural Illumination, and the great Truths of the Goſpel. But the better any thing is, the more noyſome it will be, when once he hath mixed his Poiſon with it.

It were to be wiſhed that the Defection from the Truth of the Goſpel complained of, were confined unto the inſtances already mentioned, though in them the event be deplorable among multitudes of profeſſed Chriſtians. But the ſame in ſome meaſure and degree is come to paſs among Proteſtants alſo. Men grow weary of the Truths which have been profeſſed ever ſince the Reformation, yea of thoſe in particular, which gave occaſion thereunto, and without which it had never been attempted. For beſides that many fall off unto thoſe extremes of Error before inſiſted on, ſome on the one hand, and ſome on the other, the Reformed Religion is by not a few, ſo taken off from its old foundations, ſo unhinged from thoſe Pillars of important Truths, which it did depend upon, and ſo ſullied by a confuſed medly of Noyſom Opinions, as that its loſs in Reputation of Stability and Uſefulneſs, ſeems almoſt irreparable. Hence are Diviſions, Debates and Animoſities multiplied about the principal Articles of our Religion, whereby thoſe Tongues are divided and Hands ingaged in mutual inteſtine conflicts, which all united were few enough to preſerve the

Remainders

Remainders of the Proteſtant Profeſſion from the Artifices and Power of him, who doth not deſpair once more to impoſe his Yoke on the Neck of the whole Chriſtian World. For nothing can more prepare the way of his ſucceſs, than the ſhaking of the Doctrine of the Reformed Churches from that conſiſtency, wherein for ſo long a time it ſtood firm and ſtable againſt all oppoſition.

But there is in this matter nothing abſolutely new under the the Sun; no inſtance can be given of any Church or Nation in the World, which ever received the profeſſion of the Goſpel, that did not ſooner or later either totally or in ſome conſiderable Degrees, fall off from the Doctrine which it reveles and the Obedience which it requireth. Men do but deceive themſelves, who ſuppoſe that the Purity of Religion will be preſerved in Confeſſions and Canons, whilſt ſome make it their buſineſs to corrupt its Truth, and few or none make it their buſineſs to preſerve its Power. And therefore at this day on one account or other the Defection is almoſt Catholick. For it is in vain for any to pretend that the preſent general viſible Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, doth in any tolerable meaſure anſwer the Original Pattern of it in the Scripture, or the firſt Tranſcript thereof in the primitive Believers. And that, which in this degenerate ſtate of things doth principally exerciſe the minds of conſiderate men, is, whether there ought to be an immediat

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Endeavour to reduce as many as will or can comply therewith, unto the original ſtandard in Profeſſion Obedience and Worſhips, or whether the preſent poſture of things be not ſo far to be complyed withal, as to preſerve therein the ſmall Remainders of Religion among the Community of Chriſtians who are not capable of ſuch a Reduction. The difference, that is in the Judgments of men herein, is the ground of all thoſe leſſer Controverſies and Opinions, which will be compoſed and have an end put unto them, when God ſhall graciouſly afford unto us all, a freſh revival of Evangelical Faith, Love and Holineſs, and, I fear, not before.

Upon ſome Conſiderations of this ſtate of things in the World, and under fears, perhaps not altogether groundleſs, that a further progreſs will yet be made in this woful declenſion from the Power and Purity of Evangelical Truth, I ſet my ſelf into a general Enquiry what might be the ſecret Cauſes, and Reaſons whence it is that all ſorts of Perſons in all Ages have been ſo prone to apoſtatize from the ſincere profeſſion of the Goſpel in Faith and Obedience, as Experience in the ſucceſs of things manifeſts them to have been. And moreover an occaſion was adminiſtred unto thoughts of that nature, from my engagement in the Expoſition of the ſixth Chapter of the Epiſtle to the Hebrẽws, *wherein the Apoſtle ſo eminently deſcribes the nature of total Apoſtacy, with the end of Apoſtates in the righteous Judgment of God.*

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For considering the greatness of that sin, and the Terror of the Lord with respect thereunto, and not knowing whereunto the daily advance of impiety, prophaneness and abominable lusts, with ignorance, Error, and superstition, might at length arrive; thoughtfulness of what might be required at the last day of my self, though cast in a mean and obscure condition in the World, did not a little exercise my mind. The Glory of God, the honour of Christ and the Gospel, the Eternal welfare of the Souls of men being eminently concerned, I knew not how he could have the least satisfaction in the Truth and Reality of his own Christianity, who was not greatly affected with, and did not really mourn for their suffering in this woful Apostasie. What I have attained unto in that kind, I have no Reason to declare; but hope I may say without the offence of any, that, as I verily believe, neither my Prayers nor Tears have been proportionable unto the Causes of them in this matter, so I can and will say that they have been real and sincere.

I was not Ignorant of the Weakness and impertinency of all thoughts, that a Person of my mean condition in the World, disadvantaged by all imaginable circumstances that might prejudice the most sincere Endeavours, should attempt any thing with respect unto the Relief of Nations or National Churches, which yet are not without the verge of this fatal Evil. To mourn for them in secret, to

labour in prayers and ſupplications for a more plentifull effuſion of the Spirit of Chriſt upon them for their good, are things which although they may deſpiſe, yet God will accept in and from the meaneſt of them that call on his name in ſincerity. Unto whom other Oportunities and Advantages are granted, from them other things will be required. And it is no doubt a great account they have to give, who are admitted and eſteemed as thoſe whoſe Place and Duty it is, to ſtem the current of overflowing Impiety and Prophaneneſs, and effectually to apply the Sovereign Remedies of all thoſe evils unto the Souls and Conſciences of men. Sad will it be for them under whoſe hand this breach ſhall be, if they endeavour not to prevent it with their utmoſt diligence, and the open hazard of all their earthly concerns. A learned writer of the Church of England, *affirms*, That there were two, no ſmall ſins of noyſome Hypocriſie, that he had eſpied among others; the one an opinion there can be no fit matter of Martyrdom in a State authorizing the true profeſſion of that Religion which among many we like beſt, and left unto our ſelves would make choyce of. The other which in part feeds this, a perſwaſion that meer Errors in Doctrine or Opinion, are more pernitious than affected indulgence to lewd Practices, or continuance in ſinfull courſes, or open breaches of Gods Commandements: *And after he had declared, that*

that Miniſters of the Goſpel may deny Chriſt, or manifeſt their being aſhamed of the Goſpel, by not oppoſing his Word as they ought unto the Sins of men; *he adds*; that any Age ſince Chriſtian Religion was firſt propagated, hath wanted ſtore of Martyrs, is more to be attributed unto the Negligence, Ignorance and Hypocriſie, or want of Courage in Chriſt's Embaſſadors, or appointed Paſtors, than unto the Sincerity, Mildneſs or Fidelity of the Flock, eſpecially of the Bell-weathers or chief Ring-leaders; Jac. Tom. 1: B. 4: C. 4: *with much more to the ſame purpoſe, which will deſerve ſome mens conſiderations, before all things of this Nature be too late.*

But there is a Duty of trading with a ſingle Talent. And if there be a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not. And this alone hath made me adventure the propoſal of my thoughts about the Nature, Cauſes, and Occaſions of the preſent Defection from the Goſpel, and Decay of Holineſs, with the means of Preſervation from its Infection, and Prevention of its Prevalency in private Perſons. For it is to no purpoſe to ſhut up all endeavours under Fruitleſs Complaints, nor yet to attempt an Oppoſition unto Effects whoſe Cauſes are not well known and conſidered. Wherefore the Inveſtigation and Declaration of the Cauſes of this

evil, is the principal subject of the ensuing discourses. And if I have attained but thus much, that Persons of more Understanding and Abilities to find out the hidden Springs of the inundations of Sin and Errors in the Christian World, and who have more Advantages to improve their discoveries unto publick good, shall be hereby excited to undertake so necessary a Work and Duty, I shall esteem my self to have received a full reward.

There is one thing yet whereof I must advise those Readers which are pleased to concern themselves in any writings of mine. The publishing of this Exposition of some verses of the sixth Chapter of the Epistle unto the Hebrews, *may have an appearance of my deserting that continued Exposition of the whole Epistle, which I had designed. But as I know not what I may attain unto, in the very near Approach of that Season, wherein I must lay down this Tabernacle, and the daily warning which through many infirmities I have thereof, so I am resolved whilst I live, to proceed in that work as God shall enable, and other present necessary duties will allow. And the Sole Reason added unto the seasonableness (as I supposed) of this discourse, why this part of the Exposition is singly proposed unto publick view, was, because the thoughts which arose thereon were drawn forth into such a length, as would have been too great a Digression from the context and design of the Apostle.*

THE

THE NATURE and CAUSES OF APOSTASIE FROM THE GOSPEL.

CHAP. I.

The Nature of Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel declared, in an Expoſition of Heb. VI. verſ. 4, 5, 6.

INtending an Enquiry into the Nature, Cauſes, and Occaſions of the preſent Defection that is in the World, from the Truth, Holineſs and Worſhip of the Goſpel, I ſhall lay the Foundation of my

whole Diſcourſe, in an Expoſition of that paſſage in the Epiſtle of *Paul the Apoſtle unto the Hebrews*, wherein he gives an Account both of the Nature of *Apoſtaſie*, and of the Puniſhment due unto *Apoſtates*. For as this will lead us naturally unto what is deſigned; ſo an Endeavour to free the Context from the Difficulties wherewith it is generally ſuppoſed to be attended, and to explain the Mind of the Holy Ghoſt therein, may be neither unacceptable nor unuſefull: And this is Chap. vi. *v.* 4, 5, 6. whoſe words are theſe that follow.

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ τοὺς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας, γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένους θεοῦ ῥῆμα, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, καὶ παραπεσόντας, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

Ἀδύνατον γὰρ· *Impoſſibile enim*; that is, *eſt*; *it is impoſſible*. *Syr.* אלא לא משכחין. *But they cannot.* This reſpects the *power* of the Perſons themſelves, and not the *Event* of things; it may be not improperly as to the Sence. *Beza* and *Eraſmus*; *fieri non poteſt*; *it cannot be*. The ſame with *impoſſible*. But the uſe of the word Ἀδύνατον in the New Teſta-

Teſtament, which ſignifies ſometimes onely what is *very difficult*, not what is *abſolutely* denyed, makes it uſefull to retain the ſame word, as in our Tranſlation; *For it is impoſſible.*

Τὲς ἅπαξ φωτισθέντας; דהבין וחדאוכן למעמודיתא נחתו: *Syr. Thoſe who one time, or once deſcended unto Baptiſm*; of which Interpretation we muſt ſpeak afterwards. All others, *qui ſemel fuerint illuminati, who were once enlsghtened.* Onely the *Æthiopick* follows the *Syriack*; ſome read *illuſtrati*, to the ſame purpoſe.

Γευσαμένες τε τῆς δωρεᾶς ἐπερανίε. *Vulg. Lat. Guſtaverant etiam donum cœleſte; etiam*, for *et.* Others expreſs the Article by the *Pronoun*, by reaſon of its Reduplication. *Et guſtaverint donum illud cœleſte*; and have taſted of *that heavenly* gift. *Syr. The gift that is from heaven.* And this the *Emphaſis* in the Original ſeems to require. *And have taſted of that heavenly gift.*

Καὶ μετόχυς γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίε. *Et Participes facti ſunt Spiritus ſancti. Vulg. Lat. And are* made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt. All others, *facti fuerint*; *have been* made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt; *Syr.* רוחא דקודשא, the *Spirit of Holineſs.*

Καὶ καλὸν γευσαμένες θεῦ ῥῆμα. *Vulg. Lat. Et*

gustaverunt nihilominus bonum Dei verbum. Rhem. have Moreover tasted the good word of God. But *moreover* doth not express *nihilominus*: and have *notwithstanding*, which hath no place here, καλὸν ῥῆμα *verbum pulchrum.*

Δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. *Virtutesque seculi futuri.* Syr. חילא *Virtutem*; the *power.* Vulg. *seculi venturi.* We cannot in our Language distinguish between *futurum* and *venturum*, and so under it, *the world to come.*

Καὶ παραπεσόντας; Vulg. *& prolapsi sunt. Rhem.* And *are fallen.* Others. *Si prolabantur*: which the sense requires: *if they fall*, that is, *away*, as our Translation; properly. *Syr.* דתוב נחטין *that sin again*, somewhat dangerously; for it is one kind of sinning onely that is included and expressed.

Πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν. Vulg. *rursus renovari ad pœnitentiam*; *to be renewed again to repentance*, rendring the *active* verb *passively.* So *Beza* also, *ut denuo renoventur ad resipiscentiam*: that they should again be renewed to Repentance. The word is *active*, as rendred by ours, to *renew them again to repentance*

Ἀνασταυροῦντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. *Rursum crucificentes sibimetipsis filium Dei.* καὶ παρα-

δειγμα

δειγματίζοντας. Vulg. *Et oſtentui habentes. Rhem. and making him a mockery.* Eraſ. *ludibrio habentes.* Beza, *ignominiæ exponentes.* One of late; *ad Exemplum Judæorum excruciant*; torment him as did the Jews.

For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the Heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they ſhall fall away, (for any) to renew them again to repentance; ſeeing they crucifie agian to themſelves the Son of God, and put him to open ſhame (or treat him ignominiouſly.)

THat this paſſage in our Apoſtles diſcourſe hath been looked upon as accompanied with great Difficulties, is known to all. And many have the differences been about its Interpretation. For both Doctrinally & Practically, ſundry have here ſtumbled and miſcarried. It is almoſt generally agreed upon, that from theſe words, and the colourable but indeed perverſe Interpretation, and application made of them by ſome in the Primitive times, occaſioned by the then preſent Circumſtances of things,

to be mentioned afterwards, the *Latin* Church was ſo backward in receiving the Epiſtle it ſelf, that it had not abſolutely prevailed therein in the days of *Hierome*, as we have elſewhere declared. Wherefore it is neceſſary, that we ſhould a little inquire into the occaſion of the great conteſts which have been in the Church almoſt in all Ages, about the ſence of this place.

It is known that the *Primitive Church* according to its Duty, was carefully watchfull about the Holineſs and upright walking of all that were admitted into the Society and fellowſhip of it. Hence, upon every known and viſible failing, they required an open Repentance from the Offenders, before they would admit them unto a participation of the ſacred Myſteries. But upon flagitious and ſcandalous crimes, ſuch as Murder, Adultery, or Idolatry, in many Churches they would never admit thoſe who had been guilty of them into their Communion any more. Their greateſt and moſt ſignal triall, was with reſpect unto them, who through fear of death complyed with the *Gentiles* in their Idolatrous Worſhip, in the time of perſecution. For they had fixed no certain general Rule whereby they ſhould unanimouſly proceed, but every

every Church exercised Severity or Lenity, according as they saw cause, upon the circumstances of particular instances. Hence *Cyprian* in his banishment would not positively determine concerning those of the Church in *Carthage*, who had so sinned and fallen, but defer'd his thoughts until his return; when he resolved to advise with the whole Church, and settle all things according to the councell that should be agreed on amongst them. Yea many of his Epistles are on this subject, peculiarly; and in them all, if compared together, it is evident, that there was no Rule agreed upon herein; nor was he himself well resolved in his own mind, though strictly on all occasions opposing *Novatianus*, wherein it had been well if his Arguments had answered his Zeal. Before this the Church of *Rome* was esteemed in particular more remiss in their Discipline, and more free than other Churches in their readmission unto Communion, of notorious Offenders. Hence *Tertullian* in his Book *de Pœnitentia*, reflects on *Zepherinus* the Bishop of *Rome*, that he had *admitted Adulterers unto Repentance, and thereby unto the communion of the Church.* But that Church proceeding in her Lenity, and every day enlarging her charity, *No-*

vatus and Novatianus, taking offence thereat, advanced an opinion in the contrary extreame. For they denyed all hope of Church-pardon, or of a Return unto Eccleſiaſtical Communion, unto them who had fall'n into open ſin after Baptiſm; and in eſpecial peremptorily excluded all Perſons whatſoever who had outwardly complied with Idolatrous Worſhip in time of perſecution, without reſpect unto any diſtinguiſhing circumſtances. Yea they ſeem to have excluded them from all exſpectation of forgiveneſs from God himſelf. But their followers terrified with the uncharitableneſs and horror of this perſwaſion, tempered it ſo far, as leaving all Perſons abſolutely to the mercy of God upon their Repentance, they only denyed ſuch as we mentioned before a readmiſſion into Church communion, as *Aceſius* ſpeaks expreſsly in *Socrates*; *l.* 1. *cap.* 7. Now this opinion they endeavoured to confirm, as from the nature and uſe of *Baptiſme*, which was not to be reiterated; whereon they judged, that no pardon was to be granted unto them, who fell into thoſe ſins which they lived in before, and were cleanſed from at their *Baptiſme*; So principally from this

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place of our Apostle, wherein they thought their whole Opinion was taught and confirmed. And so usually doth it fall out very unhappily with men, who think they clearly see some peculiar Opinion or Perswasion, in some *singular Text* of Scripture, [†] and will not bring their interpretation of it, unto the *Analogy* of faith, whereby they might see how contrary it is to the whole design and current of the Word in other places. But the Church of *Rome* on the other side judging rightly from other directi-

[†] *Solenne est hæreticis alicujus capituli ancipitis occasine adversus exercitum sententiarum instrumenti totius armari.* Tert. de pudicit; *utique æquum, incerta de certis, obscura de manifestis præjudicari, ut ne inter discordiam certoroum & incertorum, manifestorum & obscurorum, fides dissipetur.* Id. de Resur. Ἅπαντα ὀρθὰ ἐνώπιον τῶν συνιέντων, φησὶ ἡ γραφὴ τοῦτ' ἔστι τῶν ὅσοι ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ σαφηνείσθησαν τῶν γραφῶν ἐξήγησιν κατὰ τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὸν κανόνα ἐκδεχόμενοι διασώζουσι, κανὼν δὲ ἐκκλησιαστικὸς ἡ συνωδία καὶ συμφωνία νόμου τε καὶ προφητῶν τῇ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου παρουσίαν παραδιδομένῃ διαθήκῃ *Clem. Abr. Stromat. 6.* εὖ οἶδα ὅτι ῥητὰ τινα παραλήψονται γραφῆς οἱ καὶ ταῦτα βουλόμενοι τολμᾶν φάσκειν ἀπὸ Θεοῦ γεγονέναι, μὴ δυνάμενοι ἓν ὕφος ἀποδεῖξαι τῆς γραφῆς αἰτιομένης μὲν τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας ἀποδεχομένης δὲ τοὺς εὖ πράττοντας. καὶ οὐδὲν ἧττον κακεῖνα λεγούσης ἅπνα περισπᾶν δοκεῖ ὀλίγα ὄντα τοὺς ἀμαθῶς τὰ θεῖα γράμματα ἀναγινώσκοντας. *Origen. ad Cels. lib. 6.*

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ons given in the Scripture, that the *Novatians* tranſgreſſed the Rule of Charity and Goſpel-diſcipline in their Severities; yet as it ſhould ſeem, and is very probable, knew not how to anſwer the Objection from this place of our Apoſtle. Therefore did they rather chooſe for a ſeaſon, to ſuſpend their aſſent unto the Authority of the whole *Epiſtle*, than to prejudice the Church by its Admiſſion. And well was it that ſome Learned men afterwards by their ſober Interpretations of the words, plainly evinced that no Countenance was given in them unto the errors of the *Novatians*; for without this it is much to be feared that ſome would have preferred their intereſt in their preſent controverſie, before the Authority of it, which would in the iſſue have proved ruinous to the Truth it ſelf. For the Epiſtle being deſigned of God unto the common Edification of the Church, would have at length prevailed, whatever ſence men through their prejudices and ignorance ſhould put upon any paſſages of it. But this controverſie is long ſince buried; the Generality of the Churches in the world being ſufficiently remote from that which was truly the miſtake of the *Novatians*, yea the moſt of them do bear

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peaceably in their Communion, without the leaſt exerciſe of Goſpel-diſcipline towards them, ſuch perſons as concerning whom the diſpute was of old, whether they ſhould ever in this world be admitted into the Communion of the Church, although upon their open and profeſſed Repentance. We ſhall not therefore at preſent need to labour in this controverſie.

But the ſence of theſe words hath been the ſubject of great conteſts, on other occaſions alſo. For ſome doe ſuppoſe, and contend, that they are *real and true Believers*, who are *decypphered* by the Apoſtle, and that their *Character* is given us in and by ſundry inſeparable adjuncts, and properties of ſuch Perſons; Hence they conclude, that ſuch Believers may *totally and finally fall from Grace*, and periſh eternally. Yea it is evident that this *Hypotheſis* of the final Apoſtacy of true Believers, is that which influenceth their minds and judgements to ſuppoſe that ſuch are here intended. Wherefore others who will not admit that according to the tenor of the Covenant of Grace in Chriſt Jeſus, true Believers can periſh everlaſtingly, do ſay, that either they are not here intended, or if they are, that the words are only comminatory, wherein although

though the *Conſequence* in them in a way of arguing be true, namely that on the *ſuppoſition* laid down, the *inference* is certain, yet the *ſuppoſition* is not aſſerted in order unto a certain Conſequent, whence it ſhould follow that true Believers might ſo really fall away, and abſolutely periſh. And theſe things have been the matter of many conteſts among Learned men.

Again; there have been ſundry miſtakes in the *practical Application* of the intention of theſe words, unto the Conſciences of men, moſtly made by themſelves, who are concerned. For whereas by reaſon of ſin, they have been ſurprized with Terrors and troubles of Conſcience, they have withall in their Darkneſs and Diſtreſs, ſuppoſed themſelves to be fallen into the condition here diſcribed by our Apoſtle; and conſequently to be irrecoverably loſt. And theſe Apprehenſions uſually befall men on two occaſions. For ſome having been overtaken with ſome *great actual ſin*, againſt the *ſecond Table*, after they have made a profeſſion of the Goſpel, and having their conſciences harraſed with a ſenſe of their Guilt, (as it will fall out where men are not greatly hardned through the deceitfullneſs of ſin) they judg that they are fallen under the ſentence denounced in

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this Scripture againſt ſuch ſinners, as they ſuppoſe themſelves to be, whereby their ſtate is irrecoverable. Others doe make the ſame judgement of themſelves, becauſe they have *fallen* from that conſtant Compliance with their Convictions, which formerly led them unto a ſtrict performance of Duties, and this in ſome courſe of long continuance. Now whereas it is certain, that the Apoſtle in this diſcourſe gives no countenance unto that ſeverity of the *Novatians*, whereby they excluded offenders everlaſtingly from the peace and communion of the Church; nor to the *final Apoſtacy* of true Believers, which he teſtifieth againſt in this very Chapter, in compliance with innumerable other Teſtimonies of Scripture to the ſame purpoſe; nor doth he teach any thing whereby the *conſcience of any ſinner*, who deſires to return to God and to finde acceptance with him, ſhould be diſcouraged or diſheartned; we muſt attend unto the Expoſition of the Words, in the firſt place, ſo as not to break in upon the boundaries of other Truths, nor tranſgreſs againſt the *Analogy* of faith. And we ſhall find that this whole diſcourſe compared with other Scriptures, and freed from the prejudices that men have brought

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unto it, is both remote from adminiſtring any juſt occaſion to the miſtakes before mentioned, and is a needfull wholſom commination, duely to be conſidered by all Profeſſors of the Goſpel.

In the words, we conſider, 1. The Connexion of them unto thoſe foregoing, intimating the occaſion of the Introduction of this whole diſcourſe. 2. The Subject deſcribed in them, or the Perſons ſpoken of, under ſundry Qualifications, which may be enquired into, joyntly and ſeverally. 3. What is ſuppoſed concerning them. 4. What is affirmed of them on that Suppoſition.

1. The Connexion of the words is included in the *cauſal conjunction*; γὰρ *For.* It reſpects the introduction of a Reaſon for what had been before diſcourſed, as alſo of the Limitation which the Apoſtle added expreſſely unto his purpoſe of making a progreſs in their farther inſtruction; *if God permit.* And he doth not herein expreſs his judgement that they to whom he wrote were ſuch as he deſcribes, for he afterwards declares that he *hoped better things* concerning them; only it was neceſſary to give them this caution, that they might take due care not to be ſuch.

ſuch. And whereas he had manifeſted that they were *ſlow* as to the making of a progreſs in knowledge, and a ſuitable practice; he lets them here know the danger that there was in continuing in that *ſlothfull* condition. For not to proceed in the wayes of the Goſpel and Obedience thereunto, is an untoward entrance into a total Relinquiſhment of the one and the other. That therefore they might be acquainted with the Danger hereof, and be ſtirred up to avoyd that Danger, he gives them an account of the miſerable Condition of thoſe who after a Profeſſion of the Goſpel, beginning at a *Non-proficiency* under it, do end in *Apoſtaſie* from it. And we may ſee, *That the ſevereſt Comminations, are not onely uſefull in the Preaching of the Goſpel, but exceeding neceſſary towards Perſons that are obſerved to be ſlothfull in their Profeſſion.*

2. The Deſcription of the Perſons that are the Subject ſpoken of, is given in *five Inſtances* of the *Evangelical* Priviledges whereof they were made partakers, notwithſtanding all which, and againſt their obliging Efficacy to the contrary, it is ſuppoſed that they may wholly deſert the Goſpel it ſelf. And ſome things we may obſerve concerning this Deſcription of them

them in general. As, 1. The Apoſtle deſigning to expreſs the fearfull State and Judgement of theſe Perſons, deſcribes them by ſuch things as may fully evidence it to be, as *unavoidable*, ſo *righteous* and equal. Thoſe things muſt be ſome eminent Priviledges and Advantages, whereof they were made partakers by the Goſpel. Theſe being deſpiſed in their *Apoſtacy*, doe proclaim their deſtruction from God to be rightly deſerved. 2. That all theſe Priviledges do conſiſt in certain eſpecial Operations of the Holy Ghoſt, which were peculiar unto the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel; ſuch as they neither were, nor could be made partakers of in their *Iudaiſme*. For the Spirit in this ſence, was not received by *the works of the Law, but by the hearing of faith, Gal.* 3. 2. And this was a Teſtimony unto them that they were delivered from the Bondage of the Law, namely by a participation of that *Spirit* which was the great Priviledge of the Goſpel. 3. Here is no expreſs mention of any Covenant-*Grace*, or Mercy, in them, or towards them; nor of any *Duty* of Faith, or Obedince, which they had performed. Nothing of *Juſtification*, *Sanctification*, or *Adoption*, is expreſly aſſigned unto them. Afterwards

wards, when he comes to declare his hopes and perſwaſion concerning theſe *Hebrews*, that they were not ſuch as thoſe whom he had before deſcribed nor ſuch as would ſo fall away unto perdition, He doth it upon three grounds whereon they were differenced from them. As, 1. That they had *ſuch things as did accompany Salvation*, that is, ſuch as Salvation is inſeparable from. None of theſe things therefore had he aſcribed unto thoſe whom he deſcribeth in this place; for if he had ſo done, they would not have been unto him an Argument and Evidence of a contrary End, that theſe ſhould not fall away and periſh as well as thoſe. Wherefore he aſcribes nothing to theſe here in the Text, that doth peculiarly *accompany Salvation*, verſ. 9. 2. He deſcribes them, by their *Duties of Obedience* and Fruits of Faith. This was their *work and labour of Love* towards the Name of God, *verſ.* 10. And hereby alſo doth he difference them from theſe in the Text, concerning whom he ſuppoſeth that they may periſh eternally; which theſe Fruits of ſaving Faith and ſincere Love cannot doe. 3. He addes, that in the preſervation of thoſe there mentioned, the *Faithfulneſs of God* was concerned; *God is*

not unrighteous to forget. For they were ſuch (he intended) as were intereſted in the Covenant of Grace, with reſpect whereunto alone, there is any engagement on the *Faithfulneſs* or *Righteouſneſs* of God, to preſerve men from Apoſtaſie and Ruine; and there is ſo with an equal reſpect unto all who are ſo taken into that Covenant. But of theſe in the Text, he ſuppoſeth no ſuch thing, and thereupon doth not intimate, that either the Righteouſneſs or Faithfulneſs of God were any way engaged for their preſervation, but rather the contrary. This whole deſcription therefore referres unto ſome eſpecial *Goſpel Priviledges* which Profeſſors in thoſe dayes were promiſcuouſly made partakers of, and what they were in particular, we muſt in the next place enquire.

Απαξ φωτισθέντας. The firſt thing in the Deſcription is, that they were ἅπαξ φωτισθέντες; *once enlightened.* Saith the *Syriack* Tranſlation, as we obſerved, *Once baptized*; It is very certain, that early in the Church, Baptiſm was called φωτισμὸς, *Illumination*; and φωτίζειν to *enlighten*, was uſed for to *Baptize.* And the ſet times wherein they ſolemnly adminiſtred that Ordinance, were called ἡμέραι τῶν φωτῶν, the

dayes

dayes of Light. Hereunto the *Syriack* Interpreter ſeems to have had reſpect: And the word ἅπαξ *once*, may give countenance hereunto. Baptiſm was once onely to be celebrated, according to the conſtant Faith of the Church in all Ages. And they called Baptiſm *Illumination*, becauſe it being one Ordinance of the Initiation of Perſons into a participation of all the myſteries of the Church, they were thereby tranſlated out of the Kingdome of Darkneſs into that of Light and Grace. And it ſeems to give further countenance hereunto, in that, *Baptiſm* really was the beginning and Foundation of a participation of all the other ſpiritual Priviledges that are mentioned afterwards. For it was uſual in thoſe times, that upon the baptizing of perſons, the Holy Ghoſt came upon them, and endowed them with extraordinary gifts peculiar to the dayes of the Goſpel, as we have ſhewed in our conſideration of the Order between *Baptiſme* and *Impoſition of hands*. And this Opinion hath ſo much of probability in it, that having nothing therewithall unſuited unto the *Analogy* of Faith, or Deſign of the place, that I ſhould embrace it, if the word it ſelf as here uſed, did not require another Interpretation. For it

was a good while after the writing of this Epiſtle, and all other parts of the New Teſtament, at leaſt an Age or two, if not more, before this word was uſed *Myſtically* to expreſs Baptiſm. In the whole Scripture it hath another ſence, denoting an inward Operation of the Spirit, and not the outward Adminiſtration of an Ordinance. And it is too much boldneſs to take a word in a peculiar ſence in one ſingle place, diverſe from its proper ſignification and conſtant uſe, if there be no circumſtances in the Text forcing us thereunto, as here are not. And for the word ἅπαξ *Once*, it is not to be reſtrained unto this particular, but referres equally unto all the inſtances that follow; ſignifying no more but that thoſe mentioned were really and truely partakers of them.

Φωτίζομαι, is to give *Light* or knowledge by teaching; the ſame with הורה, which is therefore ſo tranſlated oft-times by the *Greeks*. As by *Aquila*, *Exod.* 4. 12. *Pſal.* 119. 33. *Prov.* 4. 4. *Iſa.* 27. 11. as *Druſius* obſerves. And it is ſo by the LXX. *Judg.* 13. 8. 2 *Kings* 12. 2. chap. 17. 27. Our Apoſtle uſeth it for to *make manifeſt*, that is, *bring to light*, 1 *Cor.* 4, 5. 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. And the meaning of it, *Joh.* 1. 9. where we render

render it *lighteth*, is to Teach. And φωτισμὸς is Knowledge upon Inſtruction, 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. εἰς τὸ μὴ αὐγάσαι αὐτοῖς τὸν φωτισμὸν τῦ εὐαγγελίε, *that the light of the Goſpel ſhould not ſhine into them*; that is, the Knowledge of it; ſo *verſ.* 6. πρὸς φωτισμὸν τῆς γνώσεως. *The light of the Knowledge.* Wherefore, to be *enlightened* in this place, is to be inſtructed in the Doctrine of the Goſpel, ſo as to have a Spiritual Apprehenſion thereof. And this is ſo termed on a double Account:

1. Of the *Object*, or the things known and apprehended. For Life and Immortality are *brought to light by the Goſpel*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. Hence it is called Light. *The Inheritance of the Saints in light.* And the State which men are thereby brought into, is ſo called in oppoſition to the Darkneſs that is in the world without it, 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. The world without the Goſpel is the Kingdom of Sathan; ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται; 1 *Joh.* 5. 19. The whole of the world, and all that belongs unto it, in diſtinction from, and oppoſition unto the New Creation, is under the Power of the wicked one, the Prince of the Power of Darkneſs, and ſo is full of Darkneſs; it is τόπος ἀυχμηρὸς, 2 *Pet.* 1. *a dark place*; wherein Ignorance, Folly,

Errors and Superſtition do dwell and reign. By the Power and Efficacy of this Darkneſs are men kept at a diſtance from God, and know not whither they goe. This is called *walking in Darkneſs*, 1 *Joh.* 1. 6. whereunto *walking in the Light*, that is, the Knowledge of God in Chriſt by the Goſpel, is oppoſed, *verſ.* 7. On this Account is our Inſtruction in the Knowledge of the Goſpel called *Illumination*, becauſe it ſelf is *Light*.

2. On the Account of the *Subject*, or the *Mind* it ſelf, whereby the Goſpel is apprehended. For the Knowledge which is received thereby, expells that Darkneſs, Ignorance and Confuſion, which the Mind before was filled and poſſeſſed withall. The Knowledge, I ſay, of the Doctrines of the Goſpel, concerning the Perſon of Chriſt, of God's being in him reconciling the World to himſelf, of his Offices, Work and Mediation, and the like Heads of Divine Revelation, doth ſet up a *ſpiritual Light* in the Minds of Men, enabling them to diſcern what before was utterly hid from them, whileſt alienated from the Life of God, through their Ignorance. Of this Light and Knowledge there are ſeveral Degrees, according to the Means of Inſtruction

on

on which they do enjoy, the Capacity they have to receive it, and the Diligence they uſe to that purpoſe: But a competent meaſure of the Knowledge of the Fundamental and moſt material Principles or Doctrines of the Goſpel is required, unto all that may thence be ſaid to be *illuminated*; that is, freed from the Darkneſs and Ignorance they once lived in, 2 *Pet.* 1. 18, 19, 20. This is the firſt Property whereby the Perſons intended, are deſcribed; they are ſuch as were *illuminated* by the Inſtruction they had received in the Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Impreſſion made thereby on their Minds, by the Holy Ghoſt; for this is a common work of his, and is here ſo reckoned: And the Apoſtle would have us know, that

I. *It is a great Mercy, a great Priviledge, to be Enlightened with the Doctrine of the Goſpel, by the effectual working of the Holy Ghoſt.* But,

II. *It is ſuch a Priviledge as may be loſt, and end in the Aggravation of the Sin, and Condemnation of thoſe who were made Partakers of it.* And,

III. *Where there is a Total Neglect of the due Improvement of this Priviledge and*

Mercy, the Condition of ſuch Perſons is hazardous, as inclining towards Apoſtaſie.

Thus much lyes open and manifeſt in the Text. But that we may more particularly diſcover the Nature of this firſt part of the Character of Apoſtates, for their ſakes who may look after their own Concernment therein, we may yet a little more diſtinctly expreſs the Nature of that Illumination and Knowledge which is here aſcribed unto them; and how it is loſt in *Apoſtaſie*, will afterwards appear. And

1. There is a Knowledge of Spiritual things, that is purely *Natural* and *Diſciplinary*, attainable and attained without any eſpecial Aid or Aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt. As this is evident in common Experience, ſo eſpecially among ſuch as caſting themſelves on the ſtudy of Spiritual things, are yet utter ſtrangers unto all ſpiritual Gifts. Some Knowledge of the Scripture and the things contained in it, is attainable at the ſame rate of pains and ſtudy with that of any other Art or Science.

2. The *Illumination* intended, being a Gift of the Holy Ghoſt, differs from, and is exalted above this Knowledge that is purely

purely *natural*. For it makes neerer Approaches unto the Light of Spiritual things in their own Nature, than the other doth. Notwithſtanding the utmoſt improvement of Scientifical Notions that are purely Natural, the things of the Goſpel in their own Nature are not onely unſuited unto the Wills and Affections of Perſons endued with them, but are really *Fooliſhneſs* unto their Minds. And as unto that Goodneſs and Excellency which give Deſireableneſs unto Spiritual things, this Knowledge diſcovers ſo little of them, that moſt men hate the things which they profeſs to Believe. But this *Spiritual Illumination* gives the Mind ſome Satisfaction with Delight and Joy in the things that are known. By that Beam whereby it ſhines into Darkneſs, although it be not fully comprehended, yet it repreſents the way of the Goſpel as a way of *Righteouſneſs*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 21. which reflects a peculiar Regard of it on the Mind.

Moreover, the Knowledge that is meerly *Natural*, hath little or no Power upon the Soul, either to keep it from Sin or to conſtrain it to Obedience. There is not a more ſecure and profligate Generation of Sinners in the world, than thoſe who are under

under the ſole conduct of it. But the *Illumination* here intended, is attended with Efficacy, doth effectually preſs in the Conſcience and whole Soul, unto an abſtinence from Sin, and the Performance of all known Dutyes: Hence Perſons under the Power of it and its Convictions, do oft-times walk blameleſly and uprightly in the world, ſo as not with the other to contribute unto the Contempt of Chriſtianity. Beſides, there is ſuch an Alliance between ſpiritual Gifts, that where any one of them doth reſide, it hath aſſuredly other accompanying of it, or one way or other belonging unto its train, as is manifeſt in this place. Even a ſingle Talent is made up of many pounds. But the Light and Knowledge which is of a mere Natural Acquirement, is ſolitary, deſtitute of the Society and Countenance of any ſpiritual Gift whatever. And theſe things are exemplified unto common obſervation every day.

3. There is a ſaving, ſanctifying Light and Knowledge, which this *Spiritual Illumination* riſeth not up unto: For, though it tranſiently affect the Mind with ſome Glances of the Beauty, Glory, and Excellency of Spiritual things; yet it doth not give that direct, ſteady, intuitive inſight into

into them, which is obtained by Grace. See 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. Chap. 4. 4, 6. Neither doth it renew, change, or transform the Soul into a Conformity unto the things known, by planting of them in the Will and Affections, as a gracious, saving Light doth, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *Rom.* 6. 17. *Rom.* 12. 1. These things I judged necessary to be added, to clear the Nature of the first Character of Apostates.

The Second thing asserted in the Description of them, is, *That they have tasted of the heavenly Gift*; γευσαμένους τε τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου; The doubling of the *Article* gives *Emphasis* to the Expression. And we must enquire, (1.) What is meant by the *Heavenly Gift*; And, (2.) What by *Tasting* of it. Τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς ἐπουρανίου.

First: The *Gift of God*; δωρεὰ, is either δόσις, *donatio*, or δώρημα, *donum*. Sometimes it is taken for the *Grant* or giving it self, and sometimes for the thing *given*. In the first sence it is used, 2 *Cor.* 9. 15. *Thanks be to God*, ἐπὶ τῇ ἀνεκδιηγήτῳ αὐτοῦ δωρεᾷ, for *his Gift that cannot be declared*; that is, fully or sufficiently: Now this *Gift* was his *Grant* of a free, charitable, and bountifull Spirit to the *Corinthians*, in ministring unto the poor

poor Saints. The *Grant* hereof is called *Gods Gift*; So is the Gift of Christ used also: *Ephes.* 4. 7. *according to the measure of the Gift of Christ*; that is, according as he is pleased to *give* and *grant* of the Fruits of the Spirit unto men: See *Rom.* 5. 15, 17. *Ephes.* 3. 7. Sometimes it is taken for the *Thing given*; properly δῶρον or δώρημα, as *Jam.* 1. 17. so it is used, *Joh.* 4. 10. *If thou knewest the Gift of God*, τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ, *The Gift of God*, that is, the *Thing given* by him, or to be given by him. It is, as many judge, the Person of Christ himself in that place, which is intended. But the Context makes it plain, that it is the *Holy Ghost*; For he is that *Living Water* which the Lord Jesus in that place promiseth to bestow. And so far as I can observe, δωρεὰ, the *gift*, with respect unto God as denoting the *thing given*, is no where used but onely to signifie the Holy Ghost; And if it be so, the sence of this place is determined, *Acts* 2. 38. *Ye shall receive* τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, *the Gift of the Holy Ghost*; not that which he *gives*, but that which he *is*. *Chap.* 8. 20. *Thou hast thought* δωρεὰν τοῦ θεοῦ *that the gift of God may be purchased with Money*; that is, the Power of the Holy Ghost in Miraculous Operations. So expressely,

preſſely, *chap.* 10. 45. *chap.* 11. 17. Elſewhere. δωρεὰ, ſo far as I can obſerve, when reſpecting God, doth not ſignifie the thing given, but the *grant* it ſelf. The Holy Spirit is ſignally the *Gift of God* under the New Teſtament.

And he is ſaid to be ἐπουράνιος, *heavenly*, or from Heaven. This may have reſpect unto his Work and Effect, they are *heavenly* as oppoſed to Carnal and Earthly. But principally it regards his *Miſſion* by Chriſt after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, *Act.* 2. 33. *Being exalted and having received the Promiſe of the Father, he ſent the Spirit.* The Promiſe of Him was, that he ſhould be ſent *from Heaven*, or ממעל, *from above*, as God is ſaid to be above, which is the ſame with *heavenly*; *Deut.* 4. 39. 2 *Chron.* 5. 23. *Job* 31. 2, 8. *Iſa.* 2. 2, 15. ממרום, and *Chap.* 45. 8. When he came upon the Lord Chriſt to anoynt him for his Work, *the Heavens were opened*, and he came from above, *Matth.* 3. 16. ſo *Acts* 2. 2. At his firſt coming on the Apoſtles, there came a *ſound fror. Heaven.* Hence he is ſaid to be ἐπισταλθεὶς ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ; that is, to be ἡ δωρεὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡ ἐπουράνιος, *ſent from Heaven*; 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. Wherefore, although he may be ſaid to be

Τῆς ἐπουρανίου.

be *heavenly* upon other Accounts alſo, which therefore are not abſolutely to be excluded, yet his being *ſent from Heaven* by Chriſt, after his Aſcenſion thither, and Exaltation there, is principally here regarded. He therefore is this ἡ δωρεὰ ἡ ἐπουράνιος, the *heavenly Gift* here intended, though not abſolutely, but with reſpect unto an eſpecial work.

That which riſeth up againſt this Interpretation, is, that the Holy Ghoſt is expreſſely mentioned in the next Clauſe; *And were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.* It is not therefore probable that He ſhould be here alſo intended.

Anſw. (1.) It is ordinary to have the ſame thing twice expreſſed in various words, to quicken the ſence of them; and it is neceſſary it ſhould be ſo, when there are divers reſpects unto the ſame thing; as there are in this place.

(2.) The following Clauſe may be *exegetical* of this, declaring more fully and plainly what is here intended, which is uſual alſo in the Scripture; ſo that nothing is cogent from this Conſideration, to diſprove an Interpretation ſo ſuited to the ſence of the place, and which the conſtant uſe of the word makes neceſſary to be embraced. But, (3.) The

(3.) The Holy Ghoſt is here mentioned as the great *Gift* of the *Goſpel times*, as *coming down from Heaven*, not abſolutely, not as unto his Perſon, but with reſpect unto an eſpecial Work; namely, the change of the whole State of Religious Worſhip in the Church of God; whereas, we ſhall ſee in the next words, he is ſpoken of onely with reſpect unto external actual Operations. But he was the great, the promiſed heavenly Gift, to be beſtowed under the New Teſtament, by whom God would inſtitute and ordain a new Way, and new Rites of Worſhip, upon the Revelation of himſelf and Will in Chriſt. Unto him was committed the Reformation of all things in the Church, whoſe time was now come. *Chap.* 9. 10. The Lord Chriſt when he aſcended into Heaven, left all things ſtanding and continuing in Religious Worſhip, as they had done from the dayes of *Moſes*; though he had virtually put an end unto it. And he commanded his Diſciples, that they ſhould attempt no Alteration therein, untill the *Holy Ghoſt were ſent from Heaven* to enable them thereunto, *Acts* 1. 4, 5. But when he came as the great Gift of God, promiſed under the New Teſtament, he removes all the Carnal Worſhip and Ordi-

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nances of *Moſes*, and that by the full Revelation of the Accompliſhment of all that was ſignified by them; and appoints the New, Holy, Spiritual Worſhip of the Goſpel, that was to ſucceed in their Room. The Spirit of God therefore, as beſtowed for the Introduction of the *New Goſpel-ſtate*, in Truth and Worſhip, is the *heavenly Gift* here intended. Thus our Apoſtle warneth theſe *Hebrews*, that they *turn not away from him who ſpeaketh from Heaven*, Chap. 12. 25. that is, Jeſus Chriſt ſpeaking in the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel by the *holy Ghoſt ſent from Heaven*. And there is an *Antitheſis* included herein, between the Law and the Goſpel; the former being given on *Earth*, the latter being immediately from *Heaven*. God in giving of the Law made uſe of the Miniſtry of *Angels* and that on the Earth; But he gave the Goſpel Church-ſtate, by that Spirit which although he worketh on men in Earth, and is ſaid in every Act or Work to be ſent *from* Heaven, yet is he ſtill *in Heaven*, and alwayes ſpeaketh from thence; as our Saviour ſaid of himſelf, with reſpect unto his Divine Nature, *Joh.* 3. 13.

γευσαμένους τε. Secondly, We may enquire, what it is to *taſte* of this Heavenly Gift. The

The Expreſſion of *taſting* is *Metaphorical*, and ſignifies no more but to make a *Trial* or Experiment; For ſo we doe by *taſting*, naturally and properly of that which is tendred unto us to eat. We *taſte* ſuch things by the ſenſe given us to diſcern our Food, and then either receive or refuſe them as we find Occaſion. It doth not therefore include *eating*, much leſs digeſtion and turning into Nouriſhment of what is ſo taſted. For its Nature being onely thereby diſcerned, it may be refuſed, yea though we like its reliſh and ſavour upon ſome other Conſideration. Some have obſerved, that to *taſte*, is as much as to *eat*; as 2 *Sam.* 3. 35. *I will not taſte Bread, or ought elſe.* But the meaning is, I will not *ſo much as taſte* it, whence it was impoſſible he ſhould eat it. And when *Jonathan* ſayes, that he onely *taſted* a little of the Honey, 1 *Sam.* 14. 29. it was an Excuſe and Extenuation of what he had done. But it is unqueſtionably uſed for ſome kind of Experience of the Nature of things, *Prov.* 31. 18. טעמה טוב סחרה, *ſhe taſteth that her Merchandize is good*; or hath experience of it, from its encreaſe, *Pſal.* 34. 8. *O taſte and ſee that the Lord is good*; which *Peter* reſpects, 1 *Epiſt.* 2, 3. *If ſo be that ye have*

taſted that the Lord is gracious; or found it ſo by Experience. It is therefore Properly to make an Experiment or trial of any thing, whether it be received or refuſed; and is ſometimes oppoſed to Eating and Digeſtion, as *Matth.* 27. 34. That therefore which is aſcribed unto theſe Perſons, is, that they had had an Experience of the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, that Gift of God, in the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, the Revelation of the Truth, and Inſtitution of the Spiritual Worſhip of it; Of this State, and of the Excellency of it, they had made ſome Trial, and had ſome Experience; a Priviledge that all men were not made partakers of. And by this *taſte* they were convinced, that it was far more excellent, than what they had been before accuſtomed unto, although now they had a mind to leave the fineſt Wheat for their old Acorns. Wherefore, although *taſting* contain a Diminution in it, if compared with that *ſpiritual Eating and Drinking*, with that Digeſtion of Goſpel Truths, turning them into Nouriſhment, which are in true Believers; yet abſolutely conſidered, it denotes that Apprehenſion and Experience of the Excellency of the Goſpel as adminiſtred by the Spirit, which is a great

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Priviledge and ſpiritual Advantage, the contempt whereof will prove an unſpeakable Aggravation of the Sin, and the remedileſs ruine of Apoſtates. The meaning then of this *Character* given concerning theſe *Apoſtates* is, that they had ſome Experience of the Power and Efficacy of the Holy Spirit from Heaven, in Goſpel Adminiſtrations and Worſhip. For what ſome ſay of *Faith*, it hath here no place; and what others affirm of Chriſt, and his being the Gift of God, comes in the Iſſue unto what we have propoſed. And we may obſerve, further to clear the deſign of the Apoſtle in this Commination.

I. *That all the Gifts of God under the Goſpel are peculiarly Heavenly, Joh.* 3. 12. *Epheſ.* 1. 3. and that in oppoſition, (1) To *earthly* things, *Coloſs.* 3. 11, 12. (2) To *carnal Ordinances, Heb.* 9. 23. let them beware by whom they are deſpiſed.

II. *The Holy Ghoſt, for the Revelation of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and the Inſtitution of the Ordinances of ſpiritual Worſhip, is the great Gift of God under the New Teſtament.*

III. *There is a Goodneſs and Excellency in this heavenly Gift, which may be taſted or*

experienced in ſome meaſure by ſuch as never receive them, in their Life, Power and Efficacy. They may *taſte*, (1.) Of the *Word*, in its Truth, not its Power; (2) Of the *Worſhip* of the Church, in its outward Order, not its inward Beauty; (3) Of the *Gifts* of the Church, not it's Graces.

IV. *A Rejection of the Goſpel, its Truth and Worſhip, after ſome Experience had of their Worth and Excellency, is an high Aggravation of Sin, and a certain Præſage of Deſtruction.*

καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου.

The Third Property whereby theſe Perſons are deſcribed is added in thoſe words; καὶ μετόχους γενηθέντας πνεύματος ἁγίου; *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.* This is placed in the middle or Center of the Priviledges enumerated, two preceding it, and two following after; as that which is the root and animating Principle of them all. They all are Effects of the Holy Ghoſt, in his Gifts or his Graces, and ſo do depend on the participation of him. Now men do ſo partake of the Holy Ghoſt, as they do receive him. And he may be received either as unto *perſonal Inhabitation*, or as unto *ſpiritual Operations.* In the firſt way the *World*

cannot

cannot receive him, *Joh.* 14. 17. where the World is oppoſed unto true Believers, and therefore theſe here intended were not in that ſence partakers of him. His Operations reſpect his Gifts. So to partake of him, is to have a part ſhare or portion in what he diſtributes by way of ſpiritual Gifts; in anſwer unto that Expreſſion; *All theſe worketh that one and ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing unto every one ſeverally as he will*, 1 *Cor.* 12. 11. So *Peter* told *Simon* the *Magician*, that he had no *Part* in ſpiritual Gifts, he was not partaker of the Holy Ghoſt, *Act.* 8. 21. Wherefore, to be *partaker of the Holy Ghoſt*, is to have a ſhare in, and benefit of his ſpiritual Operations.

But, whereas the other things mentioned, are alſo Gifts or Operations of the Holy Ghoſt, on what Ground or for what Reaſon, is this mentioned here in particular, that they were made partakers of him, which if his Operations onely be intended, ſeems to be expreſſed in the other Inſtances?

Anſw. (1) It is, as we obſerved before, no unuſual thing in the Scripture, to expreſs the ſame thing under various Notions, the more effectually to impreſs a Conſideration and ſence of it on our mind; eſpe-

cially where an Expreſſion hath a ſingular *Emphaſis* in it, as this hath here uſed: For, it is an exceeding aggravation of the ſins of theſe *Apoſtates*, that in theſe things they were partakers of the Holy Ghoſt.

(2.) As was before intimated alſo, this participation of the Holy Ghoſt, is placed it may be in the midſt of the ſeveral parts of this Deſcription, as that whereon they do all depend, and they are all but inſtances of it. They were partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, in that they *were once enlightened*, and ſo of the reſt.

(3.) It expreſſeth their own perſonal Intereſt in theſe things. They had an Intereſt in the things mentioned not onely *objectively*, as they were propoſed and preſented to them in the Church; but *ſubjectively* they themſelves in their own Perſons were made partakers of them. It is one thing for a man to have a ſhare in, and benefit by the Gifts of the Church, another to be perſonally himſelf endowed with them.

(4.) To mind them in an eſpecial manner of the Priviledge they enjoyed under the Goſpel, above what they had in their *Judaiſme*. For, whereas they had not then ſo much as heard that there was a Holy

Holy Ghoſt, that is, a bleſſed Diſpenſation of him in ſpiritual Gifts, *Acts* 19. 2; Now they themſelves in their own Perſons were made partakers of him, than which there could be no greater aggravation of their *Apoſtaſie*: And we may obſerve in our way, that

The Holy Ghoſt is preſent with many as unto powerfull Operations, with whom he is not preſent as to gracious Inhabitation: Or, Many are made partakers of him in his *ſpiritual Gifts*, who are never made partakers of him in his *ſaving Graces. Mat.*7. 22, 23.

Fourthly, It is added in the Deſcription, that they had taſted καλὸν θεοῦ ῥῆμα, *The good Word of God.* And we muſt enquire, (1) What is meant by the *Word of God*: (2) How it is ſaid to be *Good*; and (3) In what ſence they *taſte* of it. καλὸν Θεοῦ ῥῆμα.

1. Ῥῆμα is properly *verbum dictum*; a word ſpoken; and although it be ſometimes uſed in another ſence by our Apoſtle, and by him alone, *Chap.* 1. 3. *chap.* 11. 3. where it denotes the effectual active Power of God; yet both the ſignification of the word, and its principal uſe elſewhere, denote *words ſpoken*; and when applyed

unto God, his Word as preached and declared. See *Rom.* 10. 17. *Joh.* 6. 68. The *Word of God*, that is, the Word of the Goſpel as Preached is that which they thus taſted of. But it may be ſaid, that they enjoyed the Word of God in their ſtate of *Judaiſme*: They did ſo, as to the *written Word*; for unto them were *committed the Oracles of God*, *Rom.* 3. 2. But it is the Word of God as *preached in the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel* that is eminently thus called, and concerning which ſuch excellent things are ſpoken, *Rom.* 1. 16. *Act.* 20. 32. *Jam.* 1. 21.

2. This Word is ſaid to be καλὸν, *good*, deſireable, amiable, as the word here uſed ſignifieth. Wherein it is ſo, we ſhall ſee immediately. But whereas the Word of God preached under the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, may be conſidered two wayes; (1) In General, as to the whole *Syſteme* of Truths contained therein; And (2) In Eſpecial, for the *Declaration* made of the Accompliſhment of the *Promiſe* in ſending *Jeſus Chriſt* for the Redemption of the Church; it is here eſpecially intended in this latter ſence. This is *emphatically* called ῥῆμα κυρίου, 1 *Pet.* 1. 25. So the Promiſe of God in particular is called *his Good Word*;

Jer.

Jer. 29. 10. *After Seventy years I will visit you, and perform my good word towards you*; as he calls it the *good thing* that he had promised, *Chap.* 33. 14. The Gospel is the good tidings of Peace and Salvation by Jesus Christ, *Isa.* 52. 7.

3. Hereof they are said *to taste*, as they were before of the *heavenly Gift*. The Apostle as it were studiously keeps himself to this Expression, on purpose to manifest that he intendeth not those who by Faith do really receive, feed, and live on Jesus Christ, as tendred in the Word of the Gospel, *Joh.* 6. 35, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55. It is as if he had said; I speak not of those who have received and digested the spiritual Food of their Souls, and turned it into spiritual Nourishment; but of such as have so far *tasted* of it, as that they ought to have desired it as *sincere Milk* to have grown thereby; But they had received such an Experiment of its Divine Truth and Power, as that it had various Effects upon them. And for the further Explication of these words, and therein of the Description of the State of these supposed Apostates, we may consider the ensuing Observations; which declare the sence of the words, or what is contained in them.

I. *There*

I. *There is a Goodneſs and Excellency in the Word of God, able to Attract and affect the Minds of men, who yet never arrive at ſincere Obedience unto it.*

II. *There is an eſpecial Goodneſs in the Word of the Promiſe, concerning Jeſus Chriſt, and the declaration of its Accompliſhment.*

(1.) For the firſt of theſe Propoſitions, we may enquire what is that *Goodneſs*, and wherein it doth conſiſt; as alſo how Apoſtatizing Backſliders may *taſte* thereof; which things tend to the Explanation of the words, and what is deſigned by the Apoſtle in them.

1. This *Goodneſs* and Excellency of the Word of God conſiſts in its *ſpiritual heavenly Truth*. All Truth is beautifull and deſireable; the Perfection of the Minds of Men conſiſts in the Reception of it and Conformity unto it. And although, *True* be one conſideration of any thing and *Good* another, yet they are inſeparable Properties of the ſame Subject. Whatever is *true* is alſo *good*. So are theſe things put together by the Apoſtle, *Philip.* 4. 8. And as *Truth* is Good in it ſelf, ſo is it in its Effects on the Minds of men; it gives them Peace, Satis-

Satisfaction, and Contentment. Darkneſs, Errors, Falſhood, are Evils in themſelves, and fill the Minds of Men with variety, uncertainty, ſuperſtition, dread and bondage. It is *Truth* that makes the Soul *free* in any kind, *Joh.* 8. 32. Now the Word of God is the onely pure, immixed and ſolid Truth. *Thy Word is Truth*, *Joh.* 17. 17. In moſt other things as to the beſt evidence attainable, men wander in the wilderneſs of endleſs Conjectures. The Truth of the Word of God alone, is ſtable, firm, infallible, and which gives reſt to the Soul. As God is a *God of Truth*, *Deut.* 32. 4. the *onely true God*, *Joh.* 17. 3. ſo he is, and he is alone eſſentially Truth, and the eternal Spring of it unto all other things. Hereof is this Word the onely Revelation. How excellent, how deſirable therefore muſt it needs be, and what a *Goodneſs* to be preferred above all other things muſt it be accompanyed withall! As it is infallible Truth giving Light to the Eyes and Reſt to the Soul, it is the *good Word of God.*

2. It is ſo in the *Matter* of it, or the Doctrines contained in it. As, (1) The *Nature* and *Properties* of God are declared therein. God being onely good, the onely Fountain and Cauſe of all Goodneſs, and

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in whoſe Enjoyment all Reſt and Bleſſedneſs doth conſiſt, the Revelation made of him, his Nature and Attributes, reflects a ſingular Goodneſs on it. *Joh.* 17. 3. If it be incomparably better to know God, than to enjoy the whole World and all that is in it, that Word muſt be *good* whereby he is revealed unto us, *Jerem.* 9. 23, 24. (2) It is exceeding *good* in the Revelation of the glorious Myſtery of the *Trinity*, therein alone contained. This is that Myſtery the knowledge whereof is the onely Means to have a right Apprehenſion of all other ſacred Truths; and without it, no one of them can be underſtood in a due Manner, nor improved unto a due End. This is that alone which will give true Reſt and Peace to the Soul. And there is not the meaneſt true Believer in the World, who is exerciſed in Faith and Obedience, but he hath the Power of this Truth in and upon his Mind, though he be not able to ſpeak much of the Notions of it. All Grace and Truth are built hereon, and do center herein, and thence derive their firſt Power and Efficacy. Not one ſaving Apprehenſion can we have of any gracious Diſpenſation of God towards us, but it is reſolved into the Exiſtence of God in Trinity

ty of Perſons, and the Oeconomy of their Operations with reſpect unto us. It is a *good* Word whereby that Myſtery is revealed. (3) It is ſo in the Revelation of the whole Myſtery of the *Incarnation* of *the Son of God*, with all the Effects of infinite Wiſdom and Grace thereunto belonging. What a ſatisfactory Goodneſs this is accompanyed withall, it is the moſt part of my buſineſs in this world to inquire and declare. (4) It is ſo in the Declaration of all the *Benefits* of the *Mediation of Chriſt*, in Mercy, Grace, Pardon, Juſtification, Adoption, *&c.*

3. It is a *good* Word with reſpect unto its *bleſſed Effects*, *Pſal.* 19.7,8,9. *Act.* 20.32. *Jam.* 1.21. On this Account the Pſalmiſt aſſures us, that it is *more to be deſired than Gold, yea than much fine Gold*; that it is *ſweeter than the Honey or the Honey-comb*, *Pſal.* 19. 10. That is, there is an incomparable Excellency, Worth and Goodneſs in it. And he who diſcerns not this *Goodneſs* in the Word of God, is a ſtranger unto all real Benefits by it.

(2.) How *Apoſtatizing* Perſons do *taſte* of this *good Word of God* may be briefly declared. And their ſo doing hath reſpect unto the three-fold Property of it mentioned,

tioned, whence it is denominated Good: (1) Its *Truth*; (2) Its *Subject-matter*; (3) Its *Effects*.

And, (1) They *taſte* of it as it is *True* in the Convictions they have thereof, in their Knowledge in it, and Acknowledgement of it. This gives (as it is the Nature of Truth to doe,) ſome ſerenity and ſatisfaction unto their Minds, although they are not renewed thereby. *Joh.* 5. 35. They that heard *John* preach the Truth, *rejoyced in his Light*, as finding much preſent ſatisfaction therein. So was it with them, *Luke* 4. 22. *Joh.* 7. 46. and others innumerable on the like occaſion of hearing our Saviour preach. When men through the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt do eſcape the pollutions that are in the World through luſt, and them that live in Error, they *taſte* a Goodneſs, a Sweetneſs in the Reſt and Satisfaction of their Minds, ſo as that they ſuppoſe they are really poſſeſſed of the things themſelves.

(2) With reſpect unto the *Matter* of the Word, they have a *taſte* of its *Goodneſs* in the Hopes which they have of their future Enjoyment. Mercy, Pardon, Life, Immortality and Glory, are all propoſed in the *good Word* of God. Theſe upon thoſe grounds

grounds which will fail them at laſt, they have ſuch hopes to be made partakers of, as that they find a great Reliſh and Satisfaction therein, eſpecially when they have relief thereby againſt their Fears and Convictions. For even in thoſe wayes wherein they deceive themſelves, they have a *Taſte* of what Sweetneſs and Goodneſs there is in theſe things unto them by whom they are enjoyed. And as thoſe who really believe and receive Jeſus Chriſt in the Word, do thereon *rejoyce with joy unſpeakable and full of Glory*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 8. ſo thoſe who only *taſte* of the Word, do feel in themſelves a great complacency in their Affections. *Matth.* 13. 20. For,

(3.) By this *Taſte* they may receive many *Effects* of the Word on their Minds and Conſciences, and therein have an Experience of the Word, as unto its Power and Efficacy. It belongs unto the Expoſition of the place to ſpeak a little hereunto; and withall to declare what the difference is between them, and wherein this *taſting* comes ſhort of that *receiving* and *feeding* on the Word by Faith, which is peculiar unto *true* Believers.

1. This *Taſte* is accompanyed, or it may be ſo, with Delight, Pleaſure and Satisfaction

faction in hearing of the Word preached, eſpecially where it is diſpenſed by any skilful Maſter of the Aſſemblyes, who findes out *acceptable words*, or *words of delight*, which yet are upright and Truth, *Eccleſ.* 12. 10, 11. So was it with thoſe naughty *Jews*, *Ezek.* 33. 31, 32. with *Herod*, who heard *John* the Baptiſt *gladly*, finding Delight and Pleaſure in his Preaching. So was it with multitudes that preſſed after Chriſt to hear the Word; and ſo it is to be feared that it is with many in the dayes wherein we live.

2. It gives not onely *delight* in hearing, but ſome *Joy* in the things heard. Such are the Hearers of the Word whom our Saviour compared to the *Stony ground*; they receive it with Joy, *Matth.* 13. 20. as it was with the Hearers of *John* the Baptiſt, *Joh.* 5. 35. The Word as *taſted* onely, hath this Effect on their Minds, as that they ſhall rejoyce in the things they hear; not with abiding ſolid Joy, not with *Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory*, but that which is temporary and evanid. And this ariſeth from that Satisfaction which they find in hearing of the *good things* declared; ſuch are *Mercy*, *Pardon*, *Grace*, *Immortality* and *Glory*; They cannot but rejoyce ſometimes

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at the hearing of them, though they will not be at the pains of getting an Intereſt in them.

3. The Word onely thus *taſted* of, will work on men a *Change* and *Reformation* of their Lives, with a readineſs unto the performance of many Duties, 2 *Pet.* 2. 18. 20. *Mark* 6. 20. And,

4. What inward *Effects* it may have on the *Minds* and *Affections* of men, in Illumination, Conviction, and Humiliation, I have declared at large elſewhere. But all this while this is but *taſting*; The Word of the Goſpel and Chriſt preached therein, is the *food* of our Souls, and true Faith doth not onely *taſte* it, but *feed* upon it, whereby it is turned into Grace and ſpiritual Nouriſhment in the heart. And hereunto is required; (1) The *laying it up*, or treaſuring of it in the heart, *Luke* 1. 66. *Chap.* 2. 19. No Nouriſhment will ever be obtained by *food*, unleſs it be received into the Stomack, where the Means and Cauſes of Digeſtion and Communication are placed. And if the Word be not placed in the Heart by fixed Meditation and Delight, it may pleaſe for a ſeaſon, but it will not nouriſh the Soul. (2) Food muſt be mixed and incorporated with the *digeſtive* Hu-

mour, Power, and Faculty of the Stomack, wherein ſoever it conſiſts, or it will not nouriſh. Give a man never ſo much Food, if there be any noxious humour in the Stomack hindring it from mixing it ſelf with the Means of Digeſtion, it will no way profit him. And untill the Word in the Heart be mixed and incorporated with Faith, it will not advantage us, *Heb.* 4. 2. And there is nothing hereof where there is a *taſte* of the Word onely. (3) Where men *feed* on the Word, it is turned into a *Principle* of Life, ſpiritual Strength and Growth within, which a *Taſte* of it onely will not give. As Food when it it is digeſted, turns into Fleſh and Blood and Spirits; ſo doth the Word and Chriſt therein unto the Souls of men ſpiritually. Hence Chriſt becometh our Life, and liveth in us, as the Efficient Cauſe of our ſpiritual Life; *Gal.* 2. 20. *Coloſſ.* 3. 3. and we *grow* and *encreaſe* by the Word, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. A meer *taſte*, though it may yield preſent Refreſhment, yet it communicates no abiding Strength. Hence multitudes reliſh the Word when it is preached, but never attain Life, or Srength, or Growth by it. (4) The Word received as it ought, will *transform the Soul* into the Likeneſs of God,

God, who ſends us this Food to change our whole ſpiritual Conſtitution, and to render our Natures like unto his in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs; *Epheſ.* 4. 21, 22, 23, 24. 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. This a *Taſte* onely will effect nothing towards. Nor, to conclude, will it give us ſuch a Love of the Truth, as to abide by it in Trials or Temptations, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10. nor bring forth the Fruits of it in univerſal Obedience. And I might further diſcourſe from hence of the deplorable Condition of them who ſatisfie their Minds in mere Notions of the Truth, and empty Speculations about it, without once attaining ſo much as *a taſte* of the Goodneſs of the Word; of which ſort there are many in the World; as alſo ſhew the Neceſſity which all the Hearers of the Word lye under, of a ſevere Scrutiny into their own Souls, Whether they do not reſt in a *Taſte* onely of the Word, but come ſhort of *feeding* upon it, and of Chriſt therein; but that I muſt not divert from the Text. What hath been here ſpoken, was needfull to declare the true State and Condition of the Perſons ſpoken of. The Second Propoſition mentioned, hath been treated of elſewhere.

δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος.

Lastly, It is added, δυνάμεις τε μέλλοντος αἰῶνος; *And the Powers of the World to come*, δυνάμεις are נפלאות or הגבורות; the mighty great miraculous Operations and works of the Holy Ghost. What they were and how they were wrought among these *Hebrews*, hath been declared in our Exposition on *Chap.* 2. 4. whither I referre the Reader; and they are known from the *Acts* of the *Apostles*, where sundry instances of them are recorded. I have also proved on that Chapter, that by the *World to come*, our Apostle in this Epistle intends the days of the *Messiah*, that being the usual name of it in the Church at that time, as the New World which God had promised to create. Wherefore these *Powers of the World to come*, were the Gifts whereby those Signs, Wonders, and mighty works, were then wrought by the Holy Ghost, according as it was foretold by the Prophets, that they should be so. See *Joel* 2. compared with *Acts* 2. These the Persons spoken of, are supposed to have *tasted*; for the particle τε referres to γευσαμένους foregoing. Either they had been wrought in and by themselves, or by others in their sight, whereby they had an Experience

perience of the glorious and powerfull working of the Holy Ghoſt in the Confirmation of the Goſpel. Yea, I do judge, that themſelves in their own Perſons were partakers of theſe Powers in the *Gifts of Tongues* and other Miraculous Operations, which was the higheſt Aggravation poſſible of their Apoſtaſie, and that which peculiarly rendred their Recovery impoſſible. For there is not in the Scripture an Impoſſibility put upon the Recovery of any, but ſuch as peculiarly ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; and although that Guilt may be otherwiſe contracted, yet in none ſo ſignally as this of rejecting that Truth which was confirmed by his mighty Operations in them that rejected it; which could not be done without an Aſcription of his Divine Power unto the Devil. Yet would I not fix on thoſe *extraordinary Gifts* excluſively unto thoſe that are ordinary. They alſo are of the *Powers of the World to come*. So is every thing that belongs to the Erection or Preſervation of the New World, or the Kingdom of Chriſt. To the firſt ſetting up of a Kingdom great and mighty Power is required; but being ſet up, the ordinary Diſpenſation of Power will preſerve it: So is it in this matter. The Extraordi-

nary miraculous Gifts of the Spirit were uſed in the Erection of Chriſts Kingdom, but it is continued by ordinary Gifts, which therefore alſo belong unto *the Powers of the World to come.*

From the Conſideration of this deſcription in all the parts of it, we may underſtand what ſort of Perſons it is, that is here intended by the Apoſtle. And it appears, yea is evident,

1. That the Perſons here intended, are not *true and ſincere Believers* in the ſtrict and proper ſence of that name, at leaſt they are not deſcribed here as ſuch, ſo that from hence nothing can be concluded concerning them that are ſo, as to the poſſibility of their total and final Apoſtaſie. For, (1) There is in their full and large Deſcription no mention of *Faith* or *believing*, either expreſſely or in terms equivalent. And in no other place of the Scripture are ſuch intended, but they are mentioned by what belongs eſſentially to their ſtate. And, (2) There is not any thing aſcribed to theſe perſons, that is peculiar to them as ſuch, or diſcriminative of them, as taken either from their eſpecial Relation unto God in Chriſt, or any ſuch Property of their own, as is not communicable unto others.

others. For inſtance, They are not ſaid to be called according to Gods purpoſe, to be Born again not of the Will of Man, nor of the Will of the Fleſh, but of God; not to be Juſtified, or Sanctified, or United unto Chriſt, or to be the Sons of God by Adoption, nor have they any other *Characteriſtical* Note of true Believers aſcribed to them. (3) They are in the following verſes compared to the Ground on which the *rain often falls, and beareth nothing but thorns and briars.* But this is not ſo with true Believers; For Faith it ſelf is an Herb peculiar to the encloſed Garden of Chriſt, and meet for him by whom we are dreſſed. (4) The Apoſtle diſcourſing afterwards of *true Believers*, doth in many particulars diſtinguiſh them from ſuch as might be Apoſtates, which is ſuppoſed of the Perſons here intended, as was in part before declared. For, 1. He aſcribes unto them in general *better things* and ſuch as accompany Salvation, as we obſerved, *verſ.* 9. 2. He aſcribes unto them a work and *labour of love*, as it is true Faith alone which worketh by Love, *verſ.* 10. whereof he ſpeaks not one word concerning theſe. 3. He aſſerts their Preſervation, (1) On the Account of the *Righteouſneſs* and *Faith-*

fulneſs of God, *verſ.* 11. (2) Of the *Immutability* of his *Counſel* concerning them; *verſ.* 17, 18. In all theſe and ſundry other Inſtances doth he put a difference between theſe Apoſtates and true Believers. And whereas the Apoſtle intends to declare the Aggravation of their Sin in falling away by the principal Priviledges whereof they were made partakers, here is not one word in Name or Thing of thoſe which he expreſſely aſſigns to be the chief Priviledges of true Believers, *Rom.* 8. 27, 28, 29, 30.

2. Our next Enquiry is more particularly whom he doth intend. And (1) they were ſuch as not long before were converted from *Judaiſme* unto *Chriſtianity*, upon the Evidence of the Truth of its Doctrine, and the miraculous Operations wherewith its Diſpenſation was accompanyed. (2) He intends not the *common ſort* of them but ſuch as had obtained *eſpecial Priviledges* among them. For they had received *extraordinary Gifts* of the Holy Ghoſt, as ſpeaking with Tongues, or working of Miracles. And, (3) They had found in themſelves and others convincing Evidences, that the *Kingdome of God* and the *Meſſia*, which they called the *World to come*,

come, was come unto them, and had ſatisfaction in the gloryes of it. (4) Such Perſons as theſe, as they have a work of Light on their Minds, ſo according unto the Efficacy of their Convictions may have ſuch a *Change* wrought upon their *Affections* and in their Converſation, as that they may be of great eſteem among Profeſſors; and ſuch theſe here intended might be. Now it muſt needs be ſome horrible frame of Spirit, ſome malicious Enmity againſt the Truth and Holineſs of Chriſt and the Goſpel, ſome violent love of Sin and the World, that could turn off ſuch Perſons as theſe from the Faith, and blot out all that Light and Conviction of Truth, which they had received. But the leaſt Grace is a better ſecurity for Heaven than the greateſt Gifts or Priviledges whatever.

Theſe are the Perſons concerning whom our Apoſtle diſcourſeth, and of them it is ſuppoſed by him, that they may *fall away*, παραπεσόντας. The eſpecial Nature of the Sin here intended is afterwards declared in two Inſtances or aggravating Circumſtances. This word expreſſeth the reſpect it had to the ſtate and Condition of the Sinners παραπεσόντας.

Sinners themſelves; they *fall away*; do that whereby they do ſo. I think we have well expreſſed the word, if they *ſhall fall away*. Our old Tranſlations rendred it onely, *if they ſhall fall*, which expreſſed not the ſence of the word, and was liable unto a ſence not at all intended. For he doth not ſay, if they ſhall fall into Sin, this or that or any Sin whatever that can be named; ſuppoſe the greateſt ſin imaginable, namely, the Denyal of Chriſt in the time of Danger and Perſecution. This was that Sin (as we intimated before) about which ſo many conteſts were raiſed of old, and ſo many *Canons* were multiplyed about the ordering of them who had contracted the guilt thereof. But one Example well conſidered, had been a better guide for them than all their own arbitrary Rules and Imaginations. For *Peter* fell into this ſin, and yet was renewed again to Repentance, and that ſpeedily. Wherefore, we may lay down this in the firſt place as to the ſenſe of the words: There is no particular ſin, that any man may fall into occaſionally through the Power of Temptation, that can caſt the Sinner under this Comminati-on; ſo that it ſhould be impoſſible *to renew him to Repentance*. It muſt therefore

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(ſecondly,) be a *Courſe of Sin* or ſinning, that is intended. But there are various Degrees herein alſo, yea there are divers kinds of ſuch Courſes in ſin. A man may ſo fall into a way of ſin as ſtill to retain in his Mind ſuch a Principle of Light and Conviction that may be ſuitable to his Recovery. To exclude ſuch from all hopes of Repentance, is expreſſely contrary to *Ezek.* 18. 21. *Iſa.* 55. 7. yea and the whole ſence of the Scripture. Wherefore men after ſome Conviction and Reformation of Life, may fall into corrupt and wicked Courſes, and make a long abode or continuance in them. Examples hereof we have every day amongſt us, although it may be none to parallel that of *Manaſſe.* Conſider the Nature of his Education, under his Father *Hezekiah*, the greatneſs of his Sins, the length of his continuance in them, with his following Recovery, and he is a great Inſtance in this Caſe. Whileſt there is in ſuch Perſons any ſeed of Light or Conviction of Truth which is capable of an Excitation or Revival, ſo as to put forth its Power and Efficacy in their Souls, they cannot be looked on to be in the Condition intended, though their Caſe be dangerous.

3. Our

3. Our Apoſtle makes a diſtinction between προλαὼ and πιπτω, *Rom.* 11. 11. between *ſtumbling* and *falling*, and would not allow that the unbelieving *Jews* of thoſe dayes were come ſo far as πιπτειν, that is, to fall *abſolutely*; λεγω ὐν μὴ ἔπταισαν ἵνα πέσωσι; μὴ γένοιτο. *I ſay then, have they ſtumbled that they ſhould fall? God forbid*; that is, abſolutely and irrecoverably. So therefore doth that word ſignifie in this place. And παραπιπτω increaſeth the ſignification, either as to Perverſeneſs in the Manner of the Fall, or as to Violence in the Fall it ſelf.

From what hath been diſcourſed, it will appear, what *falling away* it is that the Apoſtle here intendeth. And

(1) It is not a falling into this or that *actual Sin*, be it of what Nature it will, which may be, and yet not be a *falling away*.

(2) It is not a Falling upon *Temptation or Surprizal*, for concerning ſuch Fallings we have Rules of another kind given us in ſundry places, and thoſe exemplified in eſpecial Inſtances; but it is that which is premeditated, of Deliberation and Choyce.

(3) It is not a Falling by Relinquiſhment or Renunciation of ſome though very material

material *Principles* of Chriſtian Religion, by Error or Seduction, as the *Corinthians* fell, in denying the Reſurrection of the Dead, and the *Galatians* by denying Juſtification by Faith in Chriſt alone. Wherefore,

(4) It muſt conſiſt in a *total Renunciation* of all the conſtituent Principles and Doctrines of Chriſtianity, whence it is denominated. Such was the Sin of them who relinquiſhed the Goſpel to return unto *Judaiſme* as it was then ſtated, in oppoſition unto it and hatred of it. This it was, and not any kind of Actual ſins that the Apoſtle manifeſtly diſcourſeth concerning.

(5) For the compleating of this Falling away according to the intention of the Apoſtle, it is required that this Renunciation be *avowed* and profeſſed; as, when a man forſaketh the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, and falls into *Judaiſme*, or *Mahumatiſme*, or *Gentiliſme*, in Perſwaſion and Practice. For the Apoſtle diſcourſeth concerning Faith and Obedience as *profeſſed*, and ſo therefore alſo of their contraryes. And this *Avowment* of a Relinquiſhment of the Goſpel hath many provoking Aggravations attending it. And yet whereas ſome men may in their Hearts and Minds utterly renounce

nounce the Goſpel, but upon ſome outward ſecular Conſiderations either dare not or will not profeſs that inward Renunciation, their *falling* away is compleat and *total* in the ſight of God; and all they do to cover their Apoſtaſie in an external complyance with Chriſtian Religion, is in the ſight of God but a mocking of him, and the higheſt Aggravation of their ſin.

This is the *falling away* intended by the Apoſtle; A voluntary reſolved Relinquiſhment of, and Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel, the Faith, Rule, and Obedience thereof, which cannot be without caſting the higheſt Reproach and Contumely imaginable upon the Perſon of Chriſt himſelf, as it is afterwards expreſſed.

Concerning theſe Perſons and their thus *falling away*, two things are to be conſidered in the Text. (1) *What is affirmed of them.* (2) *The Reaſon of that Affirmation.*

The firſt is; *That it is impoſſible to renew them again unto Repentance.* The thing intended is *Negative*; to renew them again to Repentance, this is denyed of them; but the Modification of that *Negation* turns the Propoſition into an *Affirmation*; *It is Impoſſible ſo to doe.*

Ἀδυνάτον γάρ. The Importance of this word is dubious; ſome think an *abſolute*, and others onely a *moral* Impoſſibility is intended therby. This latter moſt fix upon, ſo that it is a matter rare, difficult, and ſeldom to be expected, that is intended, and not that which is *abſolutely* impoſſible. Conſiderable Reaſons and Inſtances are produced for either Interpretation. But we muſt look further into the meaning of it. Ἀδυνάτον γάρ.

All future Events depend on God, who alone doth neceſſarily exiſt. Other things *may be* or *may not be* as they reſpect him or his Will. And ſo things that are future may be ſaid to be *impoſſible*, or be ſo, either with reſpect unto the Nature of God, or his Decrees, or his Moral Rule, Order and Law. Things are impoſſible with reſpect unto the Nature of God, either abſolutely as being inconſiſtent with his Being and Eſſential Properties; ſo it is *impoſſible that God ſhould lye*: Or on ſome Suppoſition; ſo it is *impoſſible* that God ſhould *forgive ſin without ſatisfaction*, on the ſuppoſition of his Law, and the Sanction of it. In this ſence the Repentance of theſe Apoſtates *it may be* is not impoſſible. I ſay, *it may be*; It may be there is nothing in it contrary to any

any Eſſential Properties of the Nature of God, either directly or reductively. But I will not be poſitive herein. For the things aſcribed unto theſe Apoſtates are ſuch, namely, *their crucifying the Son of God afreſh, and putting him to open ſhame*, as that I know not but that it may be contrary to the Holineſs and Righteouſneſs and Glory of God as the Supreme Ruler of the World, to have any more Mercy on them than on the *Devils* themſelves, or thoſe that are in Hell. But I will not aſſert this to be the meaning of the place.

Again, things *poſſible* in themſelves, and with reſpect unto the Nature of God, are rendred *impoſſible* by Gods *Decree* and Purpoſe; he hath abſolutely determined, that they ſhall never be. So it was impoſſible that *Saul* and his Poſterity ſhould be preſerved in the Kingdom of *Iſrael*. It was not contrary to the Nature of God, but God had decreed that ſo it ſhould not be, 1 *Sam.* 15. 28, 29. But the Decrees of God reſpecting Perſons in particular, and not *Qualifications* in the firſt place, they cannot be here intended; becauſe they are free Acts of his Will, not revealed neither in particular, nor by vertue of any general Rule, as they are Soveraign Acts making differences

differences between Perſons in the ſame Condition, *Rom.* 9.11,12. What is poſſible or impoſſible with reſpect unto the Nature of God, we may know in ſome good meaſure from the certain Knowledge we may have of his Being and Eſſential Properties. But what is ſo one way or other with reſpect unto his Decrees or Purpoſes, which are Soveraign free Acts of his Will, knoweth no man, not the Angels in Heaven, *Iſa.* 40. 13, 14. *Rom.* 11. 34.

3dly, Things are *poſſible* or *impoſſible* with reſpect unto the *Rule* and *Order* of all things that God hath appointed. When in things of Duty God hath neither expreſſely commanded them, nor appointed Means for the Performance of them, then are we to look upon them as *impoſſible*, and then with reſpect unto us they are ſo abſolutely and ſo to be eſteemed. And this is the Impoſſibility here principally intended. It is a thing that God hath neither commanded us to endeavour, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promiſed to aſſiſt us in it. It is therefore that which we have no Reaſon to look after, attempt or expect, as being not poſſible by any Law, Rule, or Conſtitution of God.

The Apoſtle inſtructs us no further in the

Nature of future Events, but as our own Duty is concerned in them. It is not for us either to look, or hope, or pray for, or endeavour the Renewal of ſuch Perſons unto Repentance. God gives Law unto us in theſe things, not unto himſelf. It may be poſſible with God for ought we know, if there be not a Contradiction in it unto any holy Properties of his Nature; Only he will not have us to expect any ſuch things from him, nor hath he appointed any Means for us to endeavour it. What he ſhall doe we ought thankfully to accept; but our own Duty towards ſuch Perſons is abſolutely at an End. And indeed they put themſelves wholly out of our reach.

εἰς μετάνοιαν.

That which is ſaid to be thus Impoſſible with reſpect unto theſe Perſons, is, πάλιν ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν, *to renew them again to Repentance.* μετάνοια, in the New Teſtament with reſpect unto God, ſignifies a *Gracious Change of Mind* on Goſpel Principles and Promiſes, leading the whole Soul into Converſion unto God. תשובה. This is the beginning and entrance of our turning to God, without which neither the Will nor the Affections will be engaged unto him, nor is it poſſible for Sinners to find acceptance with him.

It

It is impoſſible ἀναγαινίζειν, *to renew.* The conſtruction of the words is defective and muſt be ſupplyed; σὲ may be added, to renew *themſelves*, it is not poſſible they ſhould do ſo; or, τινας, that *ſome* ſhould, that any ſhould renew them; and this I judge to be intended. For the Impoſſibility mentioned reſpects the Duty and Endeavours of others. In vain ſhall any attempt their Recovery by the uſe of any Means whatever. And we muſt enquire what it is to be *Renewed*, and what it is to be Renewed *again*. ἀναγαινίζειν.

Now our ἀναγαινισμὸς is the Renovation of the Image of God in our Natures whereby we are dedicated *again* unto him. For as we had loſt the Image of God by ſin, and were ſeparated from him as things Prophane, this ἀναγαινισμὸς reſpects both the Reſtauration of our Nature and the Dedication of our Perſons to God; And it is two-fold. πάλιν.

First, *Real* and *Internal* in Regeneration and effectual Sanctification. *The waſhing of Regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt*, *Tit.* 3. 5. 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 23. But this is not that which is here intended. For this theſe Apoſtates never had, and ſo cannot be ſaid to be *renewed again* unto it.

For no man can be renewed again unto that which he never had.

Secondly, It is *outward* in the *Profeſſion* and Pledge of it. Wherefore Renovation in this ſence conſiſts in the ſolemn Confeſſion of Faith and Repentance by Jeſus Chriſt, with the Seal of Baptiſm received thereon. For thus it was with all thoſe who were converted unto the Goſpel. Upon their Profeſſion of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, they received the Baptiſmal Pledge of an inward Renovation though really they were not partakers thereof. But this Eſtate was their ἀναχαινισμὸς; their Renovation. From this ſtate they fell totally, renouncing *Him* who is the Author of it, his *Grace* which is the Cauſe of it, and the *Ordinance* which is the Pledge thereof.

Hence it appears what it is πάλιν ἀναχαινίζειν, *to renew them again*. It is to bring them again into this ſtate of Profeſsion by a ſecond Renovation, and a ſecond Baptiſme as a Pledge thereof. This is determined impoſsible, and ſo unwarrantable for any to attempt. And for the moſt part ſuch Perſons do openly fall into ſuch Blaſphemies againſt, and engage (if they have Power) into ſuch Perſecution of the Truth,

as

as that they give themſelves ſufficient Direction how others ſhould behave themſelves towards them. So the Ancient Church was ſatisfied in the Caſe of *Julian*. This is the ſumme of what is affirmed concerning theſe Apoſtates, namely, That it is impoſſible to renew them unto Repentance; that is, ſo to act towards them as to bring them to that Repentance whereby they may be enſtated in their former Condition.

Hence ſundry things may be obſerved for the clearing of the Apoſtles deſign in this Diſcourſe. As,

(1) Here is nothing ſaid concerning the Acceptance or Refuſal of *any upon Repentance* or the Profeſson thereof after any ſin, to be made by the Church, whoſe Judgement is to be determined by other Rules and Circumſtances. And this perfectly excludes the pretence of the *Novatians* from any countenance in theſe words. For whereas they would have drawn their warranty from hence for the utter Excluſion from Church Communion of all thoſe who had denyed the Faith in times of Perſecution, although they expreſſed a Repentance whoſe ſincerity they could not evince; Thoſe onely are intended, who

neither do, nor can come to Repentance in ſelf. nor make a Profeſſion of it, with whom the Church had no more to doe. It is not ſaid that men who ever thus fell away, ſhall not upon their Repentance be admitted again into their former ſtate in the Church; But that ſuch is the ſeverity of God againſt them that he will not again give them Repentance unto Life.

(2) Here is nothing that may be brought in barr againſt ſuch as having fallen by any *great Sin*, or any Courſe in ſinning, and that after Light, Convictions, and Gifts received and exerciſed, who deſire to repent of their Sins and endeavour after Sincerity therein. Yea ſuch a deſire and endeavour exempts any one from the Judgement here threatned.

There is therefore in it that which tends greatly to the Encouragement of ſuch Sinners. For, whereas it is here declared concerning thoſe who are thus rejected of God, that it is impoſſible to *renew them*, or to do any thing towards them that ſhall have a tendency unto Repentance; thoſe who are not ſatisfied that they do yet ſavingly Repent, but only are ſincerely exerciſed how they may attain thereunto, have no concernment in this Commination;

but

but evidently have the Door of Mercy ſtill opened unto them. For it is ſhut only againſt thoſe who ſhall never endeavour to turn by Repentance. And although perſons ſo rejected of God, may fall under Convictions of their Sin attended with deſpair, which is unto them a foreſight of their future Condition; yet as unto the leaſt attempt after Repentance on the terms of the Goſpel, they do never riſe up unto it. Wherefore the *Impoſſibility* intended of what ſort ſoever it be, reſpects the ſeverity of God, not in refuſing or rejecting the greateſt ſinners which ſeek after and would be renewed unto Repentance, which is contrary unto innumerable of his Promiſes; but in the giving up ſuch Sinners as theſe are here mentioned unto that obdurateneſs and obſtinacy in ſinning, that blindneſs of Mind, and hardneſs of Heart, as that they neither will nor ſhall ever ſincerely ſeek after Repentance, nor may any means according to the Mind of God be uſed to bring them thereunto. And the Righteouſneſs of the exerciſe of this Severity is taken from the Nature of this Sin or what is contained in it, which the Apoſtle declares in the enſuing Inſtances. And we may in our paſſage, obſerve, That

In the preaching of the Goſpel, it is neceſſary to propoſe unto men, and to inſiſt on the Severity of God, in dealing with provoking Sinners againſt it. And indeed the *Severity* of God is principally though not ſolely exerciſed with reſpect unto ſins againſt the Goſpel. This our Apoſtle calls us to the conſideration of, in the caſe of the unbelieving *Jews*. *Rom.* 11. 22. Ἴδε οὖν χρηστότητα καὶ ἀποτομίαν θεοῦ; ὅτι μὲν τοὺς πεσόντας ἀποτομίαν. *Behold the goodneſſe and ſeverity of God; towards them that fell,* (thoſe in the Text) *ſeverity.* Ἀποτομία, is a ſharp Diſſection or cutting off. I do not therefore underſtand by it an eſſential Property of the Nature of God. It is not the ſame with his Holineſs, Righteouſneſs, or vindictive Juſtice. Theſe are eſſential Properties of the Divine Nature, whence it is that he neither will nor can abſolutely ſuffer men to ſin, and let them go for ever unpuniſhed without any Satisfaction or Attonement made for their ſins, whereof we have treated elſewhere. But by Gods *Severity* is intended the free Act of his Will, acting according unto thoſe Properties of his Nature in an eminent manner, when and how he pleaſeth. And therefore into them it is re-

reſolved. So our Apoſtle when he would intimate this *Severity* unto us to ingenerate in us a holy Fear and Reverence of God in his Worſhip, addes as his Motive, *for our God is a conſuming fire, Heb.* 12. 29. That is, of an infinitely pure, holy, righteous Nature, according to which he will deal with us, and ſo may unexpectedly break forth upon us in *Severity* if we labour not for Grace to ſerve him acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear. Wherefore this Severity of God is his exemplary dealing with provoking Sinners according to the exigence of his Holineſs and Wiſdom, without an Interpoſition of longer Patience or Forbearance. There are ſome ſins or degrees in ſinning, that neither the Holineſs, nor Majeſty, nor Wiſdom of God can ſo bear withall, as to ſuffer them to paſs unpuniſhed or unremarked on in this world. In ſuch caſes is God ſaid to exerciſe his *Severity*. And he doth ſo,

(1) In extraordinary *outward Judgements* upon open profligate Sinners, eſpecially the Enemies of his Church and Glory. Hence on ſuch an occaſion doth God give that deſcription of himſelf; *Nahum* 1. 2. *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will*

will take vengeance on his adverſaries, and he reſerveth wrath for his Enemies. When God acteth towards his Adverſaries according to the Deſcription here given of himſelf, he deals with them in *Severity.* And two things are required to make theſe Judgements of God againſt his Adverſaries in this world to be Inſtances thereof. (1) That they be *unuſual*, ſuch as do not commonly and frequently fall out in the ordinary diſpenſation of Divine Providence; *Numb.* 16. 29, 30. God doth not in the Government of the World ſuffer any thing to fall out or come to paſs that in the iſſue ſhall be contrary to his Juſtice, or inconſiſtent with his Righteouſneſs. But yet he beareth with things ſo for the moſt part, as that he will manifeſt himſelf to be exceedingly full of Patience and Long-ſuffering, as alſo to exerciſe the Faith of them that believe in the Expectation of a future Judgement. Wherefore there muſt be ſomewhat *extraordinary* in thoſe Judgements wherein God will exerciſe and manifeſt *Severity.* So it is expreſſed; *Iſa.* 28. 21. *The Lord ſhall riſe up as in Mount Perazim, he ſhall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may doe his work, his ſtrange work, and bring to paſs his act, his*

ſtrange

ſtrange act. The Work he will doe is *his* Work, but it is his *ſtrange* Work; that is, not ſtrange from or oppoſite unto his Nature, for ſo he will do nothing; but that which is *unuſual*, which he doth but ſeldome, and is therefore marvellous. Thus in ſudden deſtructions of Perſecutors or Perſons of a flagitious wickedneſs, in great Deſolations of provoking Families, Cities and Nations, in Fire from Heaven, in Inundations, Plagues, Earthquakes, and ſuch ſudden extraordinary conſuming Judgements, God giveth Inſtances of his *Severity* in the world; *Rom.* 1. 18. (2) In this caſe it is required that ſuch Judgements be *open*, *viſible*, and manifeſt both unto thoſe who are puniſhed, and to others who wiſely conſider them. So God ſpeaketh of himſelf; *Deut.* 7. 10. *God that repayeth them that hate him to their face, to deſtroy them; he will not be ſlack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face:* That is, he will do it openly and manifeſtly, that themſelves and all others ſhall take notice of his *ſeverity* therein. This I ſay is one way whereby God acts his *severity* in this world. And hereby he poureth everlaſting contempt upon the ſecurity of his proudeſt and haughtieſt Adverſaries. For when they think

think they have ſufficiently provided for their own ſafety, and ſtopped all *Avenues* of Evil according to the Rules of their Policy and Wiſdom with the beſt Obſervations they are able to make of the ordinary effects of his Providence, and ſo give up themſelves to take ſatisfaction in their Luſts and Pleaſures, He breaks in upon them with an Inſtance and Example of his ſeverity to their utter deſtruction. So when they ſay, *Peace and Safety, then ſudden deſtruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with childe, and they ſhall not eſcape*, 1 *Theſſ.* 1. 3. This will be the ſtate one day of the whole *Babyloniſh* intereſt in the world, *Rev.* 18. 7, 9. But this is not directly intended in this place; although even this effect of Gods *Severity* overtook theſe Apoſtates afterwards.

(2) In *ſpiritual Judgements.* By theſe God in his *Severity* leaveth unprofitable, provoking, and Apoſtate Profeſſors under the impoſſibility here intended of being renewed unto repentance. And this is the ſoreſt of all Gods Judgements. There is in it a ſentence of Eternal Damnation denounced on men afore-hand in this world. So our Apoſtle tells us, *Some mens ſins are open beforehand, going before to judgement;*

1 *Tim.*

1 *Tim.* 5. 24. God ſo paſſeth judgement concerning them in this world, as that there ſhall be no Alteration in their State and Condition to Eternity. And this *ſeverity* of God towards Sinners under the Goſpel, ſhutting them up under final Impenitency, conſiſts in theſe four things.

(1) God puts an end unto all his *Expectation* concerning them; He looks for no more from them, and ſo exerciſeth no more care about them. Whileſt God is pleaſed to afford the uſe of Means for Converſion and Repentance unto any, he is ſaid to *look for and expect* anſwerable Fruits; I did (ſaith he) ſo to my Vineyard, *and I looked* that it ſhould bring forth Grapes; *Iſa.* 5. 2, 4. Wherefore when God takes away all Means of Grace and Repentance from any, then he puts an End unto his own Expectation of any Fruits. For if a man can have no Fruit from his Vineyard whileſt he dreſſeth it, or his Field whileſt he tilleth it, he will never look for any after he hath given them up and laid them waſte. And on the other ſide, when he utterly ceaſeth to look for any Fruit from them, he will *till* them no more; for why ſhould he put himſelf to charge or trouble to no purpoſe? Wo unto

to the Souls of men when God in this ſence *looks for* no more at their hands; that is, when he puts an end unto that Patience or Long-ſuffering towards them from whence all ſupplyes of the Means of Converſion and Repentance doe ariſe and ſpring. This God doth by ſome, and that in ſuch wayes as we ſhall afterwards declare.

(2) God will actually puniſh them with, or inflict on them *Hardneſs of Heart* and Blindneſs of Mind, that they never ſhall Repent or Believe. *Joh.* 12. 39, 40. *Therefore they could not Believe, becauſe Eſaias ſaid again, He hath blinded their Eyes, and hardned their Heart, that they ſhould not ſee with their Eyes, nor underſtand with their Heart, and be converted, and I ſhould heal them.* God will now Judicially blind them and harden them, and by one Means or other every thing that befalls them ſhall promote their Induration. So it was with theſe *Jews*; The Doctrine of Chriſt filled them with Envy, his Holineſs with Malice, and his Miracles with Rage and Madneſs. Their *Table was a Snare* to them, and that which ſhould have been for their good turned to their hurt. So is it with all them whom God in his *Severity* hardeneth. Whether

ther the outward Means be continued unto them or no, all is one, every thing ſhall drive them farther from God and increaſe their Obſtinacy againſt him. From hence they become *Scoffers* and *Perſecutors* avowedly ſcorning and hating the Truth. And herein it may be they ſhall pleaſe themſelves untill they are ſwallowed up in Deſpair or the Grave.

(3) God uſually in his *Severity* gives them up unto *ſenſual Luſts*. So he dealt with the Idolaters of old; He *gave them up to vile affections*, *Rom.* 1. 26. ſuch as thoſe there deſcribed by the Apoſtle; and in the purſuit of them, *gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do the things that are not convenient*, ver. 28. Whence they were *filled with all unrighteouſneſs*, ver. 29. So doth God frequently deal with Apoſtates from the Goſpel, or from the principal Truths of it, unto Idolatry and Superſtition. And when they are engaged in the purſuit of theſe Luſts, eſpecially when they are Judicially given up unto them, they are held aſſuredly as under Cords and Chains unto final Impenitency.

(4) God gives ſuch Perſons up unto *Sathan* to be blinded, and lead by him into pernicious Deluſions. *Becauſe they received not*

not the love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved, God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye; that they all might be damned who loved not the Truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs, 2 Theſſ. 2. 10, 11, 12. This was the State and Condition of the Perſons here propheſied of: The Truth of the Goſpel was preached unto them, and for ſome time profeſſed by them. They received the Truth, but they received not the *Love* of it, ſo as to comply with it and improve it unto its proper End. This kept them barren and unprofitable under their Profeſſion. For where the Truth is not *loved* as well as *believed* or aſſented unto, it will bring forth no Fruits. But this was not all; They had *pleaſure in their ſins*, luſts, and unrighteouſneſs, reſolving not to part with them on any terms. Whereas therefore theſe are all of them abſolutely and without Limitation judged and condemned by the Truth of the Goſpel, they began to diſlike and ſecretly to hate the Truth it ſelf. But whereas together with their luſts and unrighteouſneſs wherein they had pleaſure, they found a Neceſſity of a Religion one or other, or the pretence of ſome Religion or other to give them countenance againſt

againſt the Truth which they rejected, they were in a readineſs to any thing that ſhould offer it ſelf unto them. In this condition in the way of Puniſhment, and as a Revenge of their horrible Ingratitude and Contempt of his Goſpel, God gives them up to the Power of Sathan, who blindes, deludes, and deceives them with ſuch Efficacy, as that they ſhall not onely readily embrace, but obſtinately believe and adhere to the Lyes, Errours and Falſhoods that he ſhall ſuggeſt unto them. And this is the way and courſe whereby ſo many carnal Goſpellers are turned off unto *Romiſh* Idolatry every day.

Other Inſtances of the *Severity* of God on this Occaſion might be given; but theſe are fully ſufficient to declare the manner of his dealing with ſuch as thoſe deſcribed in the Text, whence it follows, that their Renovation unto Repentance is *impoſſible*. For what hopes or expectations ſhould we have concerning ſuch as God hath utterly forſaken, whom he hath judicially ſmitten with Blindneſs and Hardneſs of Heart, whom he hath given up not only to the Power and Efficacy of their own Luſts and vile Affections, but alſo immediately unto Sathan to be deluded,

and lead captive at his pleaſure? In vain ſhall the Repentance of ſuch Perſons be either expected or endeavoured.

And this *Severity* of God ought to be preached and inſiſted on in the Declaration of the Goſpel, Let the Reader conſult what hath been already offered concerning the uſe of Goſpel *Threatnings* and Comminations, on the Third and Fourth Chapters. There is a pronenes in corrupted Nature to deſpiſe the Riches of the Goodneſs Forbearance and Long-ſuffering of God, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth them to Repentance, and thereon after their hardneſs and impenitent heart treaſure up to themſelves wrath againſt the day of wrath, as our Apoſtle ſpeaks, *Rom.* 2. 4, 5. Conſidering nothing in God but Mercy and Long-ſuffering, and nothing in the Goſpel but Grace and Pardon, they are ready to deſpiſe and turn them into Laſciviouſneſs, or from them both to countenance themſelves in their ſins. By this Means, on ſuch miſtaken Apprehenſions, ſuited to their Luſts and corrupt Inclinations, heightened by the craft of Sathan, do multitudes under the preaching of the Goſpel harden themſelves daily to Deſtruction. And others there are, who although

although they will not on ſuch wicked pretences give up themſelves to their Luſts and carnal Affections, yet for want of conſtant Vigilancy and watchfulneſs, are apt to have Sloth and Negligence with many ill Frames of Spirit to increaſe and grow upon them. Both ſorts are to be ſtirred up by being put in mind of this *Severity* of God. They are to be taught that there are ſecret Powers accompanying the diſpenſation of the Goſpel, continually in a readineſs to *revenge all diſobedience*; 2 *Cor.* 10. 6. That God is not mocked, but *whatſoever a man ſoweth, that he ſhall alſo reap. For he that ſoweth to the Fleſh, of the Fleſh ſhall reap corruption; but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap Life everlaſting*; *Gal.* 6. 7, 8. But I have elſewhere already ſhewed the Neceſſity there was of arming the Goſpel with Threatnings, as well as confirming of it with Promiſes, ſo as that it may not be here again at large inſiſted on.

Expoſ. Heb. Chap. 4. 1, 2.

From what hath been diſcourſed, it is evident how neceſſary and wholſome a Warning or Threatning is here expreſſed by the Apoſtle. It is the open Miſtakes of men that have drawn undue Entangle-

ments out of it; In it ſelf it is both plain and neceſſary. Shall we be afraid to ſay, that God will not renew ſuch Sinners as thoſe before deſcribed unto Rpentance? or to declare unto ſinners, that without Repentance they cannot be ſaved? or ſhall we Preach to men, that whatever Light they have had, whatever Gifts they have received, whatever Priviledges they have been made partakers of; whatever Profeſſion they have made, or for how long a ſeaſon ſoever; if they fall totally and deſpightfully from the Goſpel into that which is moſt oppoſite both to its Truth and Holineſs, yet there is no doubt, but they may again repent and be ſaved? God forbid ſo great a wickedneſs ſhould fall from our Mouths. Nay, we are to warn all Perſons in danger of ſuch Apoſtaſies, that if any one ſo draw back, Gods Soul will have no pleaſure in him; that it is a *fearfull thing* to fall into the hands of the Living God; that he will harden ſuch Sinners, and give them up to ſtrong deluſions that they may be damned; that he is not under the ingagement of any Promiſe to give them Repentance, but hath rather given many ſevere Threatnings to the contrary. He hath told us, that ſuch

Perſons

Perſons are as *Trees twice dead*, plucked up by the roots, of which there is no hope, that denying the Lord that bought them; they bring on themſelves ſwift deſtruction, whoſe Damnation ſlumbreth not, with the like Declarations of *Severity* againſt them innumerable.

But what ſhall be ſaid unto them, who having through great Temptations, and it may be Fears and Surprizals, for a ſeaſon renounced the Goſpel; or ſuch as by reaſon of great ſins againſt Light, and backſliding in Profeſſion, do apprehend themſelves to be fallen into this Condition, and yet are greatly deſirous of a Recovery, and do crye to God for Repentance and Acceptance? I anſwer as before, they are not at all concerned in this Text. Here is nothing excluding them from Acceptance with God and Eternal Salvation, be they who or what they will that ſeek it by Repentance; onely there are ſome who are excluded by God, and do obſtinately ſhut up themſelves from all Endeavours after Repentance it ſelf, with whom we have not any thing to doe.

It is true, thoſe alone are here firſtly and directly intended, who in thoſe dayes had received *extraordinary* or Miraculous Gifts

of the Holy Ghoſt. But this by juſt *Analogy* may be extended unto others, now thoſe Gifts are ceaſed in the Church. For thoſe Gifts and Priviledges which are yet continued unto men do lay (in preſent circumſtances) the ſame Obligation upon them unto Perſeverance in Profeſſion, and give the ſame Aggravation unto their Apoſtaſie, as did thoſe extraordinary Gifts formerly conferr'd upon Profeſſion. Let us not then be high-minded but fear. It is not good approaching too neer a Precipice. Let unprofitable Hearers and Backſliders in heart and wayes, be awaked, leſt they may be nearer falling under Gods *Severity* than they are aware of. But we muſt return unto our Apoſtle giving an Account of the *Nature* of this Sin which is attended with ſo ſore a Judgement. And this he doth in a double Inſtance.

ἀναςαυροῦντας.

Ἀναςαυρῶντας ἑαυτοῖς τὸν υἱὸν τῦ θεῦ. *Beza* affirms that ἑαυτοῖς, *To themſelves*, is abſent from ſome Copyes, and then the words may admit of a ſence diverſe from that which is commonly received. For ἀναςαυρῶντας, *crucifying again*, may referre unto τινας, included and ſuppoſed in ἀναςαυρίζειν, that *ſome* or *any* ſhould Renew

Renew them. It is impoſſible that any ſhould renew them to Repentance; For this cannot be done *without crucifying the Son of God again*, ſince theſe Apoſtates have utterly rejected all Intereſt in, and Benefit by his Death as once undergone for Sinners. This none can doe; we ought not, we *cannot crucifie Chriſt again*, that they may be renewed and ſaved. Who can entertain a thought tending towards a deſire that ſo it might be? And this ſence in the ſame or an alike Caſe the Apoſtle plainly expreſſeth, *Chap.* 10. 26, 27. *If we ſin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for ſin.* Chriſt cannot be offered again, and ſo crucified again, without which the ſins of ſuch Perſons cannot be expiated. For the unbloody Sacrificing of Chriſt every day in the *Maſſe* was not as yet invented; and it is a Relief fit onely for them to truſt unto, who have no Intereſt in that Sacrifice which he offered once for all. But there is in that other place an alluſion to the Sacrifices under the Law. Becauſe they could legally expiate no ſins but what were paſt before their Offering, they were to be frequently repeated upon reiterated ſinning. So from

time to time they ſinned, (as no man liveth and ſinneth not,) and had Sacrifices renewed for their ſins, applyed unto the particular ſins they had committed. This could now be ſo no more, Chriſt being once offered for Sin. whoever loſeth his Intereſt in that one Offering, and forfeiteth the Benefit of it, there is no more Sacrifice for him; Chriſt henceforth dieth no more. It cannot be hence imagined that the Grace of the Goſpel is reſtrained, as being all confined unto that one Sacrifice, from what was repreſented in the multiplyed Sacrifices of the Law.

For, (1) The *one* Sacrifice of Chriſt, extended farther as to Sins and Perſons, than *all* thoſe of the Law with all their Repetitions put together. *By him all that believe are juſtified from thoſe things which they could not be juſtified from by the Law of Moſes*, *Acts* 13. 39. There were ſome ſins under the Law for which no Sacrifice was provided, ſeeing he who was guilty of them was to dye without Mercy; as in the Caſes of Murder and Adultery, with reſpect whereunto *David* ſaith, *Thou deſireſt not Sacrifice elſe would I give it, thou delighteſt not in Burnt-offering*, *Pſal.* 51. 16. namely, in ſuch Caſes as his then was.

But,

But, (2) In caſe of *Apoſtaſie* from the one and the other, the *Event* was the ſame. There was under the Law no Sacrifice appointed for him who had *totally Apoſtatized* from its Fundamental Principles, or ſinned ביד חזקה, *preſumptuouſly*, with an hand high and ſtubborn. This was that deſpiſing of *Moſes* Law, for which thoſe that were guilty thereof, *were to dye without Mercy*, *Heb.* 10. 28. And ſo it is under the Goſpel. Wilfull Apoſtates forfeiting all their Intereſt in the Sacrifice of Chriſt, there is no Relief appointed for them, but God will cut them off and deſtroy them; as ſhall God willing be declared on that place. And this may be the ſence of the words, ſuppoſing ἑαυτοῖς not to belong originally unto this place. God hath confined all hopes of Mercy Grace and Salvation unto the *one ſingle Offering* and Sacrifice of *Jeſus Chriſt*. This our Apoſtle inſiſteth on and preſſeth, *Chap.* 9. 25, 26, 27, 28. *Chap.* 10. 12, 14. Infinite Wiſdom and Sovereign Pleaſure hath centred all Grace Mercy and Bleſſedneſs in him alone; *Joh.* 1. 14, 16, 17. *Acts* 4. 12. *Col.* 1. 19. And this *one Offering* of his is ſo ſufficient and effectually powerfull unto all that by Faith ſeek an Intereſt therein, that this

reſtraint

reſtraint is no reſtraint; nor hath any Sinner the leaſt cauſe to complain of it. If they reject and deſpiſe it, it is their own fault, and at their own Peril. Nor is it the reiterated Sacrifice of the *Maſſe*, or whatever elſe they may betake themſelves unto, that will afford them any relief.

Ἑαυτοῖς. But the word is conſtant enough in ancient *Copyes* to maintain its own ſtation, and the context requires its continuance. And this makes the work of *crucifying again*, to be the act of the Apoſtates themſelves, and to be *aſſerted*, as that which belongs unto *their ſin*, and not *denyed* as belonging to a *Relief* from their Sin. They *crucifie him again to themſelves*. They doe it not really, they cannot do ſo; but they do it *to themſelves* Morally. This is in their ſin of falling away, part of it comprized in it, which renders it unpardonable; they again crucifie the Son of God, not abſolutely, but in and to themſelves.

And we muſt inquire how they did it, or in what ſence it is by the Apoſtle charged on them. Now this (to omit all other things that may be thought to concurre herein) was,

(1) Principally by an *Acceſſion in ſuf-*

frage

ſrage unto them who had crucified him once before. Hereby they went over the ſame work with them, and did that for their own parts, which the others had done before for theirs. They approved of and juſtified the fact of the *Jews* in crucifying him as a Malefactor. For there is no *Medium* between theſe things. The Lord Chriſt muſt be eſteemed to be the Son of God, and conſequently his Goſpel to be indiſpenſably obeyed, or be ſuppoſed to be juſtly crucified, as a Seducer, a Blaſphemer and a Malefactor. For Profeſſing himſelf to be the Son of God, and witneſſing that Confeſſion unto his Death, he muſt be ſo received or rejected as an evil doer. And this was done by theſe *Apoſtates*; for, going over to the *Jews* they approved of what they had done in crucifying of him as ſuch a one.

(2) They did it by declaring that having made trial of *him* his *Goſpel* and wayes, they found nothing of *Subſtance* Truth or Goodneſs in them, for which they ſhould continue their Profeſſion. Thus that famous or infamous Apoſtate *Julian* the Emperour gave this as the Motto of his Apoſtaſie, Ἀνέγνων, ἔγνων, κατέγνων, *I have read, known and condemned* your Goſpel. And this

this hath been the way of Apoſtates in all Ages. In the Primitive times they were the *Gentiles Intelligencers*, and like the Spyes of old brought up a falſe Report upon the Land. For they were not ſatisfied (for the moſt part) to declare their diſapprobation of what was really taught believed and practiſed among the Chriſtians, but the more to countenance their *Apoſtaſie*, not only invidiouſly repreſented and odiouſly traduced what was really profeſſed, but withall invented Lyes and Calumnies about Conſpiracies, Seditions, and Inconſiſtencyes with publick Peace among them, ſo if it were poſſible, to ruine the whole Intereſt and all that belonged unto it. This is to crucifie Chriſt afreſh, and to put him to open ſhame. And ſuch is the manner of them unto this day. If any have made an Acceſſion to the more intimate Duties of Religion, as Prayer and Preaching by vertue of ſpiritual Gifts with other Acts of mutual ſpiritual Communion, which the generality of men concern not themſelves in; when in complyance with their Occaſions and Temptations they fall from them and renounce them; they aim at nothing more than by malicious ſcurrilous Repreſentations of them, and falſe

falſe Additions unto them of things perverſe or ridiculous, to expoſe them to open ſhame and ignominy. Their language is, ἀνέγνωμεν, ἴδομεν, κατέγνωμεν; *We have known and tryed theſe things, and declare their folly*; ſo hoping to be believed, becauſe of their pretended Experience, which alone is ſufficient to render them ſuſpected with all Perſons of Wiſdom and Sobriety. Now no man living can attempt an higher diſhonour againſt Jeſus Chriſt, in his Perſon, or in any of his wayes, than openly to profeſs that upon Trial of them, they find nothing in them for which they ſhould be deſired. But it had been better for ſuch Perſons, *not to have known the way of Righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn aſide from the holy Commandment delivered unto them.*

And this is the firſt Aggravation of the ſins mentioned, taken from the Act aſcribed unto the Sinners; They *crucifie him again*, they do it as much as in them lyeth, and declare that they would actually do it, if it were in their power. He addes another from the Conſideration of the Perſon who was thus treated by them. It was the *Son of God*, whom they dealt thus withall. This

τὸν υἱὸν τῦ θεῦ.

they

they did, not when he had emptyed himſelf, and made himſelf of no Reputation, ſo that it was not an eaſie matter to look thorough all the veyls of his outward Weakneſs and Condition in this world, to behold *his Glory, as the Glory of the onely Begotten of the Father*, in which ſtate he was crucified by the *Jews*; but now when he had been declared to be *the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holineſs, by the Reſurrection from the dead*, and his Divinity was variouſly atteſted unto in the world, and among themſelves; And this is the great Aggravation of ſin againſt the Goſpel, namely, of Unbelief; that it is immediately againſt *the Son of God*. His Perſon is deſpiſed in it, both Abſolutely and in the Diſcharge of all his Offices. And therefore is God himſelf ſo, becauſe he hath nothing to do with us but by his Son.

Secondly, The Apoſtle addes as another Aggravation of their Sin, καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας, *expoſing him again to publick ignominy or ſhame.* Παραδειγματίζω, is to bring any ſuppoſed Offenders unto ſuch open Puniſhment as is *ſhamefull* in the eyes of men, and renders them *vile* who are ſo traduced and puniſhed.

καὶ παραδειγματίζοντας.

niſhed. The word is but once more uſed in the New Teſtament, namely, *Matth.* 1. 19. where it is ſpoken of *Joſeph* in reference unto his Eſpouſed Wife the Holy Virgin; μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν παραδειγματίσαι. *Not willing to make her a publick Example*; that is, by bringing of her forth unto a *ſhamefull* Puniſhment for the terror of others.

According unto this ſence our Apoſtle expreſſing the Death of Chriſt as inflicted by men, reduces the Evils that accompanyed it unto two heads: (1) The *Pain* of it, and (2) The *Shame*; Chap. 12. 2. *He endured the Croſs and deſpiſed the Shame.* For as the Death of the Croſs was *pœnal*, or painfull and dolorous, ſo in the manner of it in all its Circumſtances of Time, Place, Perſon, it was moſt highly *ſhamefull.* He was in it παραδειγματισθεὶς, *ignominiouſly traduced*, or put to open ſhame; yea, the Death of the Croſs amongſt all people was peculiarly *ſhamefull.* Thus in calling over his Death in this place, he referres it unto the ſame heads of *Suffering* and *Shame*; *crucifying* him, and putting him to open *ſhame.* And in this latter he was not ſpared by theſe Apoſtates no more than in the former, ſo far as it lay in their power.

And

And hence we may raiſe a ſufficient Anſwer unto an *Objection* of no ſmall importance that ariſeth againſt our Expoſition of this place. For it may be ſaid, *That if thoſe, or many of them, or any of them, who actually and* really crucified *the Son of God in his own Perſon, and put him to open ſhame, did yet obtain Mercy and Pardon of that and all other Sins, as it is confeſſed they did; Whence is it that thoſe who renounce him, and do ſo crucifie him and put him to ſhame only* Metaphorically *and to themſelves, ſhould be excluded from all hopes of Repentance and Pardon?*

I anſwer, That the ſin of thoſe who forſake Chriſt and the Goſpel after their Conviction of its Truth, and Profeſſion of it, is on many Accounts far greater than that of thoſe who Crucified him in the dayes of his Fleſh: And there are ſundry Reaſons whereon God will exerciſe more *Severity* towards this latter ſort of ſinners than towards the former.

(1) The Sin is greater, becauſe no way to be extenuated by *Ignorance*. This is every where allowed, as that which made the Sin of Crucifying of Chriſt *pardonable* upon their Repentance, and their Repentance *poſſible*. So *Peter* in his Sermon to them,

them, layes down this as the Foundation of his Exhortation unto Repentance. *And now Brethren, I wot that through Ignorance you did it, as did alſo your Rulers, Act.* 3.17. *Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory,* 1 *Cor.* 2.8. which our Apoſtle pleads alſo in his own Caſe, 1 *Tim.* 1.13. This put their ſins among the number of thoſe which Sacrifices were allowed for of old, and which fell under the care of him who knows how to have compaſſion on the *ignorant*, and them that are out of the way.

But it may be enquired, *How* They *could be excuſed by Ignorance, who had ſo many Means and Evidences of Conviction as to the Truth of his Perſon, that he was the Meſſiah; and of his Doctrine, that it was from Heaven? For beſides the concurrent Teſtimony of* Moſes *and the* Prophets *given unto him, the Holineſs of his Perſon and Life, the Efficacy of his Doctrine, and the Evidence of his Miracles, did abundantly prove and confirm the Truth of thoſe things; ſo that they could be no otherwiſe Ignorant but by wilfull Obſtinacy.*

Anſ. 1. Theſe were indeed ſuch Means of Conviction, as that their Sin and Unbelief againſt them had no *real Excuſe*; as

himſelf every where expreſſeth; *Joh.* 15. 22. *Chap.* 12. 47, 48. *Chap.* 10. 36, 37, 38. 2. Nothing is allowed unto this Ignorance, but that it left their Repentance *poſſible*, and their Sin *pardonable*. 3. This it will doe, untill God hath uſed *all the Means* of Conviction which he intendeth, and no longer. This as yet he had not done. He had yet two farther Teſtimonyes unto the Truth, which he would graciouſly afford. (1.) His *Reſurrection* from the Dead; *Rom.* 1. 4. which was alwayes afterwards pleaded as the principal Evidence of Gods Approbation of him. (2.) The *Effuſion* of the *Holy Spirit* in his Miraculous Operations; *Act.* 2. 32, 33. *Chap.* 5. 32. 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. But where at any time God hath granted all the Means of Conviction that he pleaſeth, be they Ordinary or Extraordinary, if they are rejected, there is no hope, *Luke* 16. 29, 30, 31. On the other ſide, this Sin of Rejecting Chriſt and the Goſpel after Profeſſion is abſolutely *wilfull*, and with an high hand, againſt all the Light and Conviction that God will give of the Truth unto any of the Children of Men in this World.

(2) Theſe Perſons had an *Experience* of the Truth, Goodneſs and Excellency of the Goſpel,

Goſpel, which thoſe others had not, nor could have; For they had *taſted of the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, and had received great Satisfaction in the things they were convinced of, as was before at large declared. Wherefore in their Rejection of him and them, an unconquerable Hatred and Malice muſt be granted to be predominant. And let men take heed what they do when they begin to ſin againſt their own *Experience*, for Evil lyes at the door.

(3ly.) In and under the *crucifying* of the Lord Chriſt, God had yet a *Deſign* of Mercy and Grace to be communicated unto Men by the Diſpenſation of his *Spirit*. Therefore there was a way ſet open unto thoſe who were guilty of that Sin, to Repentance and Pardon. But now having made uſe of this alſo, that being ſinned againſt, there is no place left for any thing but *Severity*. Wherefore,

(4ly.) There was in the Sin of theſe Perſons *Blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt*. For they had received in themſelves, or ſeen in others, thoſe mighty Operations of his whereby he gave Atteſtation unto Chriſt and the Goſpel. Therefore they could not renounce the Lord Chriſt, without an

Aſcription of theſe Works of the Holy Ghoſt unto the Devil, which the Devil acted them unto. So ſaith our Apoſtle; *No man ſpeaking by the Holy Ghoſt, calleth Jeſus Anathema, or* Accurſed, 1 *Cor.* 12. 3. To call him *Anathema*, is to declare and avow that he was juſtly crucified as an Accurſed Perſon, as a publick Peſt. This was done by theſe Perſons who went over to the *Jews*, in Approbation of what they had done againſt him. This no man can doe ſpeaking by the Holy Ghoſt. That is, whoſoever doth ſo, is acted by the ſpirit of the Devil; And if he have known the Teſtimony of the Holy Spirit to the contrary, he doth it in deſpight of Him, which renders the Sin irremiſſible.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Partial Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel. Pretences of the Church of Rome *againſt the Charge of this Evil, examined and rejected.*

APoſtaſie from the Goſpel is either *Total* or *Partial.* Of the former we have treated in an high and ſignal Inſtance. When men *wilfully* and maliciouſly (for they cannot do it *wilfully* but they muſt do it *maliciouſly,*) renounce Jeſus Chriſt as a Seducer and Malefactor, going over in their ſuffrage unto the *Jews* by whom he was crucified, they enter into that part of Hell and Darkneſs which properly conſtitutes this Sin. It were well for ſuch Perſons if their Guilt had no other Aggravation, than theirs who actually *with wicked hands ſlew him, and hanged him on a Tree.* But riſing up unto a Contempt of all the Means of Conviction and Evidences of Truth that God will grant us in this world, they caſt themſelves without that Line of Divine Mercy and Pardon, which ſome of

the others were encompaſſed withall. So is it with many at this day in the world; who with wicked Hearts and blinded Minds in the purſuit of carnal Luſts, voluntarily and obſtinately embrace *Mahumetiſme*, with an open Renunciation of Chriſt and the Goſpel. Unto ſuch Perſons there is nothing left but a *fearfull Expectation of Judgement and fiery Indignation that ſhall conſume the Adverſaries.* Not that I would caſt all Perſons who may be actually hurried into this Abomination under the ſame dreadfull Doom, ſeeing the caſe in general will admit of many circumſtantial differences, if not altering the Nature of the Crime, yet diſpoſing of things unto various Events. Not onely Surprizals by mighty Temptations with dread and terrour, ſo ſhaking the Powers of Nature, as to intercept the influence of Light and Convictions of Truth, do claim an Exemption from a decretory Determination under this Sentence; but other Caſes may alſo be attended with ſome ſuch alleviating Circumſtances, as preſerving their Minds and Souls from *wilfull Malice*, leave room for the exerciſe of Soveraign Grace. I my ſelf knew one, yea was converſant with him, and aſſiſting of him in the Concerns of his Soul,

Soul, who in the *Indies* turned *Mahumetan*, was actually initiated by Circumciſion into their Superſtition, and lived in its outward Practice a year or two; who yet was ſincerely recovered unto Repentance, and died in the Faith of the Son of God.

Partial Apoſtaſie, is every Crime againſt the Goſpel which partakes of the Nature of the other in any Meaſure or Degree. And whatever doth ſo, makes an Acceſſion towards the Guilt of *crucifying the Son of God afreſh, and putting him unto open ſhame.* For it is in his Goſpel and Church alone wherein he can now ſuffer from the Sons of men. When any important Principle of Evangelical Truth is forſaken and renounced, eſpecially when Many of them are ſo; when the Rule of Obedience which the Goſpel preſcribeth is habitually neglected, when men Believe otherwiſe than it teacheth, and Live otherwiſe than it requireth, there is a *partial Apoſtaſie* from it, whoſe Guilt and Danger anſwers the Degrees and Meaſures which in each kind it proceeds unto.

And this is that which we may charge, yea which the Lord Chriſt in his Word doth charge on every Nation under Hea-

ven where the Goſpel is publickly profeſſed. Men are apt to pleaſe themſelves, to approve of their own State and Condition, wherein they have framed unto themſelves Reſt and Satisfaction. Churches content themſelves with their outward Order and Adminiſtrations, eſpecially where accompanyed with Secular Advantages; and contend fiercely that all is well, and the Goſpel ſufficiently complyed withall, whileſt their outward Conſtitution is preſerved, and their Laws of Order kept inviolate; About theſe is the World filled with endleſs Digladiations, wherein the moſt aim at no more but ſucceſs in their eſpecial Conteſts. Only a few remain who fruitleſſely complain, that under all theſe Conflicts, the Glory, Power, and Purity of Chriſtian Religion is loſt in the World. And it is known that the Judgement of Chriſt concerning Churches, as unto their good or bad ſpiritual Eſtate, is oft-times very diſtant from their own concerning themſelves. It was not onely for their ſakes, but as a Warning unto all others in all Ages, that it is entred on an everlaſting Record, that when the Church of *Laodicea* judged and declared without hæſitation, that ſhe was *rich, increaſed in Goods,*

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and wanted nothing, the Lord Chriſt, the *Amen*, the *true and faithfull Witneſs*, pronounceth her *poor*, and *blind*, and *wretched*, and *miſerable*. That things at this day are in no better a Condition in many, in moſt Churches in the World, is too evident to be denyed with any pretence of Reverence to the Word of God; and it will be afterwards made to appear.

Certainly the Lord Chriſt may ſay to the Churches and Nations among whom his Name is yet owned in the World, what God ſaid of old concerning that of the *Jews*, then his only Church; *I had planted thee a Noble Vine, wholly a right Seed; how then art thou turned into the degenerate Plant of a wild Vine unto me? Jer.* 2. 21. Yea, to moſt of them as in another place; *How is the faithfull City become an Harlot? it was full of Judgement, Righteouſneſs lodged in it, but now Murderers. Thy Silver is become droſs, thy Wine mixed with Water*; *Iſa.* 1. 21, 22. The Greatneſs of the Evil complained of, the ſecret Myſtery of its Accompliſhment, the Unreaſonableneſs Folly and Ingratitude of the Fact, the Strangeneſs of the Event, makes the complaint to be formed into a *Scheme* of Admiration. And indeed, if a man be able to conſider

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the Nature of the Goſpel, with the Benefits communicated thereby unto Mankind, he cannot but be aſtoniſhed to find the generality of them to be ſo ſoon weary of it, and ſo ready on all Occaſions to relinquiſh it; For as future Glory and bleſſed Immortality are attainable onely thereby, ſo all that true Freedom, Tranquillity, Peace and Bleſſedneſs whereof our Nature in this Life is capable, are by no other means communicable unto the Souls of men. In brief, whatever is of Advantage in any gracious Communication from God unto us, without which we are nothing but the very worſt and moſt malignant Product of Sin and Miſery, it is all confined unto the Goſpel and the Contents thereof. Wherefore the careleſneſs of men in neglecting of it, their Wickedneſs in its Relinquiſhment as to its Principles and Obedience, may well be expreſſed as God doth in the inferiour Inſtance of the Apoſtaſie of the *Jewiſh* Church, *Jerem.* 2. 11, 12. *Hath a Nation changed their Gods, which are yet no Gods? But my People hath changed their Glory for that which doth not profit. Be aſtoniſhed O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very deſolate, ſaith the Lord.* Yet thus is it and no otherwiſe, as

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we ſhall afterwards manifeſt, amongſt the generality of them that are called Chriſtians in the world.

The Church of *Rome* violently pleads an Exemption from this Charge, by virtue of eſpecial Priviledge. Not an *internal* Priviledge of Efficacious Grace unto their Minds and Wills, to preſerve it and all that belongs unto it alwayes in ſaving Faith and Obedience, wherein alone a Complyance with the Goſpel conſiſts; but an *outward* Priviledge of *Indefectibility* keeping them in the ſtate the Goſpel requireth, they know not how, but as it were, whether they will or no.

But there is no Party or Society of men under Heaven (conſidering the Notoriety of matter of Fact to the contrary) that can with leſs violence unto common Modeſty make uſe of this Pretence. So when the *Jews* of old were charged by the Prophets, of *Apoſtaſie* from the Law and the Obedience which it required, with Threats of Deſtruction for their ſins, they warded themſelves from a Conviction of Guilt and Fear of Puniſhment, by an unreaſonable, yea outragious Confidence in Church Priviledges, then not onely appropriated but confined unto them, crying out, *The Temple*

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of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are theſe; This they thought ſufficient to repell the Charge of the Prophets, to vindicate their Innocency, and ſecure their Peace. The Reply of the Prophet unto them will equally ſerve in both caſes; *Behold, ye truſt in lying words which cannot profit. Will ye ſteal, murder and commit Adultery, and ſwear falſely, and burn Incenſe unto Baal, and walk after other Gods whom ye know not; And come and ſtand before me in this Houſe, which is called by my Name, and ſay, We are delivered to doe all theſe Abominations? Jerem.* 7. 8, 9, 10. A Plea of Innocency and hope of Impunity, under an evident Guilt of the higheſt Immoralities, and the vileſt of Superſtitions, do equally participate of Folly and Impudence.

It is fallen out with this Church of *Rome* ſomewhat in like manner as it did with him from whom ſhe falſely pretends to derive her wonderfull Priviledge of *Indefectibility*. For when our Lord Chriſt foretold that all men ſhould forſake him, he alone with the higheſt Confidence, and in a ſingular manner undertook the contrary for himſelf. But all the Prerogative which he pretended unto iſſued onely in this, that when all

all the other Diſciples forſook their Maſter and fled, according to his Prediction, he *alone* forſook him and *denyed* him. And that Impoſſibility of Failing which this Church appropriates unto it ſelf as its ſingular and incommunicable Priviledge, hath poſſibly been a means of, but aſſuredly is accompanyed with, a peculiar Apoſtaſie above all other Churches in the World. Nothing certainly can be more vain in it ſelf, nor more pernicious unto the Souls of them who are under the Power of ſuch an Apprehenſion, than this Pretence, when all Evidences in matter of Fact do openly teſtifie to the contrary. The Principal Nations of its Communion are at this day engaged in fierce bloody and cauſeleſs Warrs, and theſe ſo managed, as to be accompanyed with a Confluence of all thoſe Evils and flagitious Wickedneſſes which have a tendency to make Mankind ſinfull and miſerable. Is this that Love and Peace which according to the Rule of the Goſpel ought to be among the Diſciples of Chriſt, and without which it is impoſſible they ſhould have any Evidences in themſelves, or give any Teſtimony unto the World, that ſo they are? Doth this anſwer the Promiſes to be accompliſhed in the dayes

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of the *Meſſia*, *Iſa.* 2. 3, 4. or the innumerable Precepts given by Jeſus Chriſt himſelf as to Unity, Love and Peace? But Warres they ſay are Lawfull, and ſo no Argument that thoſe engaged in them are Revolters from the Rule of the Goſpel: I ſay it may be ſo; but it is far ſafer to judge all Warre unlawfull, than to juſtifie all the Warres that rage in *Chriſtendome*; or to ſuppoſe them conſiſtent with the Rule or Doctrine of the Goſpel. The truth is, many things muſt concurre to reconcile any of them unto that Obedience which we owe to the Prince of Peace; Nor is any of them of that Nature or Neceſſity, but that if the Goſpel had its proper Efficacy on the Minds of all that are called Chriſtians, and its due Authority over their Conſciences, they would be all prevented. However, in a Church pretending to be no way fallen off, or Apoſtatized from the Evangelical Rule, it is juſtly expected that another *Repreſentation* be made of the Religion taught by Jeſus Chriſt, than that which appears in the Deſolations that are wrought in the Earth, through the Luſts and Rage of the Members of it. The ſtate of things amongſt them ſeems not to conſtitute that Kingdome of Righteouſneſs,

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Love and Peace, which Chriſt came to ſet up in the World, and which indeed at preſent by reaſon of the general Apoſtaſie of the Nations, is little elſewhere to be found but in the Souls of his ſanctified ones. And thoſe particular Churches are bleſſed in a peculiar manner, who endeavour in their Profeſſion and Obedience, in any meaſure to riſe up unto an Expreſſion thereof.

Beſides, the Lives of the Generality of them who adhere unto the Communion of that Church, of the moſt who *preſide* therein, are openly contradictory unto the Evangelical Rule of Obedience. It may for the moſt part be ſaid concerning them with reſpect unto the whole, as one of them ſaid of a part of the New Teſtament; *Either this is not Goſpel, or we are not Chriſtians.* In brief, if the Kingdom of Chriſt, which was once a Kingdom of Light, and Truth and Holineſs, of ſeparation in Principles, Affections, and Converſation from the World, of Communion with God, and Loving Kindneſs among Men, of Righteouſneſs, Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, may become, and is become a Kingdom of Darkneſs, Pride, Ignorance, Ambition, Perſecution, Blood, Superſtition and Idolatry; then and not elſe doth it viſibly remain among

among them, and they have nothing Apoſtatized from the Laws and Government of it.

But they can eaſily diſcharge themſelves of the Guilt of this Imputation. For notwithſtanding that the things mentioned be in part acknowledged to be ſo, (as to what purpoſe is it to deny the Sun to ſhine at Noon-day?) yet the Peace, Love, and Unity, the Holineſs and Righteouſneſs that ought according to the Goſpel to be and reſide in the Church, are found amongſt them on other Accounts. For the whole Body of the Church and all the Members of it, agree and are united in one Head, even the *Pope of Rome*, which is the onely Evangelical Unity required of the Diſciples of Chriſt; and the Holineſs of the Worſhip with that of the Saints that have been among them, as alſo of their preſent retired Devotioniſts, and the Charity of many, teſtified by Magnificent Works of Piety and Bounty, do ſufficiently anſwer that *Sanctification*, Holineſs and Love, that Conformity unto Chriſt in Heavenly-mindedneſs and Obedience, which the Goſpel requireth. But this is no other but an Account of the true Nature of that Apoſtaſie of the latter times, which is foretold by the

the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *In the laſt dayes perillous times ſhall come; for men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, proud, boaſters, blaſphemers, diſobedient unto Parents, unthankefull, unholy, without natural Affection, truce-breakers, falſe Accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, traytors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleaſures, more than lovers of God, having a form of Godlineſs but denying the power thereof.* Under the Power of the moſt filthy and outragious Luſts, men frame to themſelves an outward *Shape* Image and Repreſentation of Holineſs; They delineate a Form of Religion, by a Subſtitution of other things in the room of the Life and Subſtance of it, which are loſt. The Power of Chriſtianity is openly denyed, in their being acted by the Power of all thoſe Luſts which are contrary unto it. For the Grace of God in the Goſpel *teacheth* them by whom it is received, *to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world.* This men cannot more perfectly renounce, than in being *fooliſh and diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers luſts and pleaſures, living in malice and envy, hatefull and hating one another*; ſuch Perſons being &c.

ficiently remote from being *ſaved by the waſhing of Regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghoſt.* Whileſt men live in this ſtate and condition, wherein a compleat Denyal or Renunciation of the Power of Godlineſs or Religion doth conſiſt, if to ſupply the abſence thereof, they draw and take on themſelves a *ſcheme*, *Form*, and *Appearance* of it, by the Application of the Names, Offices, and Properties of Goſpel Effects unto outward lifeleſs Duties or *Appearances* of them, the Apoſtaſie foretold is compleatly accompliſhed. This is to let *David* goe, and to foyſt an Image covered with *Goats hair* in his ſtead; or at beſt like *Rehoboam*, to make *brazen Shields* in the room of thoſe of *Gold* taken away by *Shiſhak.* No otherwiſe doth the Church of *Rome* deal in this matter. The Power of Faith, Love, Peace, Holineſs, Conformity unto Chriſt, Self-denyal, and all the Principles of an Heavenly converſation being loſt and denyed among the generality of its Members, and all the real Glory of Chriſtianity thereby forfeited and deſpiſed; they have ſet up a *Form* or *Image* of it, wherewith they content themſelves, and attempt to deceive others. Inſtead of that Myſtical ſpiritual Union with himſelf and among

among themſelves which Chriſt prayed for, and purchaſed for his Diſciples, they have ſubſtituted the *Morphoſis* or *Mormo* of an Agreement in profeſſing Subjection to the *Pope of Rome*: For that heavenly *Love* of one another in him, and for his ſake, which he renews the Souls of Believers unto by his Grace, we are preſented in their Profeſſion, with outward Works of Charity and Bounty, meaſured and valued by the Advantage which redounds unto the principal Actors in this *Show*. *Peace* the great Legacy of *C*hriſt unto his followers, with God in their own Minds, with the whole *C*reation not ſhut up under the *C*urſe, that comprehenſive Grace and Mercy wherein is comprized all the Bleſſedneſs which in this World we can be made partakers of, is preſerved in the flouriſhing Proſperity and Temporal Succeſſes of the *C*ourt of *Rome*: The internal effectual Operations of the Spirit of Grace, have the outward Diſpenſations of Ordinances ſhuffled in their place and ſtead. Regeneration is Baptiſm; Growth in Grace is Epiſcopal *C*onfirmation; the Application by Faith of the Blood of *C*hriſt once offered in an holy Sacrifice for us, muſt give way unto the daily Sacrifice of the *Maſſe* offered for the

Sins of the Quick and the Dead; Diſciplines and ſome outward bodily Severities muſt ſupply the place of the *Mortification* of Sin; the Power whereof is never more loſt and denyed than it is under the higheſt external Pretences of it. So the whole Work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of Grace and Supplication in the Church, muſt be, and is unto themſelves ſatisfactorily repreſented, by reading, ſaying, chanting with Voyces and Muſical Inſtruments, Prayers and Praiſes invented and compoſed by they know not whom, and in a *Language* which the moſt of thoſe who are obliged to comply with them, underſtand not at all.

And even the worſt part of their Image is in what they have fixed on as the Delineation and Repreſentation of the Rule and Diſcipline of Chriſt in the Goſpel. For rejecting that humble, holy, meek, diligent endeavour to preſerve all the Faithfull in Obedience, Love, Unity, and fruitfull Walking, by the Application of the Commands of Chriſt unto their Souls and Conſciences through his Spirit, and with his Authority; They have erected a worldly *Domination over Gods Heritage*, in whoſe Exerciſe more Force, Fraud, Extortion,

Extortion, Oppreſſion, Violence and Bloodſhed, have been acted and perpetrated, than it may be in the ſecular Government of any Tyrannical State in the World.

Other Inſtances of the like Nature might be given. This is that μόρφωσις τῆς εὐσεβείας or ἀληθείας τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν, that *figure* and Repreſentation of Evangelical Truth and Holineſs, wherewith theſe men would countenance themſelves in, and cover from others, that Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel which predominant Luſts have caſt them into, and keep them under the Power of, according as it was foretold it ſhould come to paſs in the *latter dayes*.

It is yet replyed, That whatever Apprehenſions others may have, or whatever Judgement ſhall be made of the predominant Evils reigning among the generality of them, and their ſeeming inconſiſtency with the Doctrine of the Goſpel, yet the *Promiſe of the Spirit to lead into all Truth*, is not only granted but *confined* unto them; ſo as that they are eternally ſecured as to Faith and Belief, whatever other miſcarriages they may fall into. And the Nature of this Plea is ſo effectual, that if it could be made good and confirmed on their behalf, notwithſtanding I ſee not as yet how it is

poſſible to ſolve other difficulties that occurre in this caſe, yet would it with me determine all things in *controverſie* between them and us. Let them but evince that they *alone* do inherit the promiſed Spirit of Chriſt, excluſively unto all others, that he dwells, reſides, works, guides in and among them *alone*; and in other things we will ſpare them the trouble of further pleading their Cauſe. But their pretence hereunto is impotent and contemptible. For what they inſiſt upon amounts to no more but this; that They being the Church the Promiſe of giving the Spirit is made and fulfilled unto Them alone, which only beggs the Matter that is in principal difference between us; and the Diſputes about it are endleſs. If indeed they argued on the other hand, that they are the onely Church of Chriſt, becauſe they alone enjoy the Promiſe of the Spirit, as the Inference were undoubtedly certain, (for it is the preſence of Chriſt by his Spirit that gives being or Exiſtence unto the Church) ſo the Truth of the Aſſertion were capable of an eaſie Trial and a ſatisfactory Determination. For where the Spirit doth ſo reſide, according to the Promiſe of Chriſt, and abide with any, as he doth with no other in the

ſame

ſame kind, he will infallibly *manifeſt* his preſence by his Operations, and ſufficiently evidence them with whom he is, to be the Church of Chriſt, ſeeing as he is the promiſed Spirit of Truth the *World* cannot receive him. His Operations are all of them either in a way of *Grace* or *Gifts*; and his Gifts are either Extraordinary or Ordinary. When therefore thoſe of the Church of *Rome* can manifeſt that they enjoy ſuch gracious Operations of the Spirit, as others enjoy nothing of the ſame Kind, or that they are furniſhed and ſupplyed with ſuch *ſpiritual Gifts* either Ordinary or Extraordinary, as no other do participate of with them or beſides them; not proving it by ſaying they alone are the Church and therefore it muſt be ſo, but by the Evidence of the things themſelves as it was in the Primitive Times, they ſhall not only free themſelves from the Charge of any dangerous Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel, but enjoy moreover all that their hearts can wiſh.

But this Pretence hath been ſo often and ſo fully evinced of Falſhood, and that by all means of Conviction in the Examination of Cauſes and Effects, (it being undenyably demonſtrated, That as no ſuch

Promiſe was ever peculiarly made unto them, much leſs on ſuch terms of ſecurity as they imagine, and that in the iſſue as unto matter of Fact inſtead of being *lead into all Truth*, they have departed almoſt from all,) that it needs not again to be inſiſted on. And indeed ſuch a Promiſe as is pretended, is altogether inconſiſtent with the Glory and Honour of the Goſpel of God. The Word of the Goſpel, that is, the Truth contained therein is the ſole external Inſtrument of the Reconciliation of Sinners unto God, and of their Walking before him in Obedience unto his Glory; other End and Uſe it hath none. To give by irrevocable Grant the Poſſeſſion of this Truth and not in order unto that End, and ſo to continue it whether ever that Effect be produced or no, yea where it is not, correſponds not with other Fruits of the Wiſdom of God in the Diſpenſation of his Grace. And whereas the Goſpel as to the Nature of its Doctrine will and may be interpreted by its Fruits and Effects in the Lives of men; to allow them the ſecurity of its Truth on a ſuppoſition of a courſe of ſin, and a continuance in a ſtate of Irreconciliation or Enmity againſt God, is to expoſe the Doctrine of it, and the Law

Law of Obedience contained in it, to juſt cenſure and reproach.

Wherefore notwithſtanding theſe or any other Pretences of an alike Nature, we may ſafely proceed to ſhew, How the Generality of Chriſtians have *partially Apoſtatized* from the Goſpel, and to enquire into the Wayes, Means, Cauſes, and Reaſons thereof.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Apoſtaſie from the Myſtery, Truth or Doctrine of the Goſpel. Proneneſs of Perſons and Churches thereunto; proved by all ſorts of Inſtances.

THere are three things in the Goſpel which are as the Eſſentially conſtitutive parts of it: (1) The *Myſtery* of its *Doctrine*, which is the *Object* of Faith. (2) The *Holineſs* of its *Precepts*, which is the *Matter* of our Obedience. And (3) the *Purity* of its *Inſtitutions* of Worſhip, which is the *Trial* of our Faith and Obedience, as to their Profeſſion. With reſpect unto theſe we are to make our Enquiry, both as unto matter of Fact, and as unto the Reaſons, Cauſes, and Occaſions of it, in the Apoſtaſie from them that is in the world. Inſtances hereof in every one of the particulars mentioned we ſhall find in our own dayes, and thoſe both deplorable and of ill abode. But I ſhall not confine my ſelf unto the preſent Age, nor unto what

what is done or come to paſs among our ſelves; but conſider things with reſpect unto the whole Courſe and Progreſs of Religion ſince the firſt Preaching and Declaration of the Goſpel.

1. The *Myſtery* of the Truth or Doctrine of the Goſpel which is the *Object of our Faith*, is the *Foundation* of its Precepts and Inſtitutions, of the Holineſs it requireth, and of the Worſhip that it appointeth. Where this is forſaken, the others cannot be retained. Men may *profeſs* the Truth, and yet not yield *Obedience* unto it, *Tit.* 1. 16. 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. But without the *real Belief* of it, no man can be *obedient* as he ought. The Obedience which the Goſpel requireth, is the *Obedience of Faith*, *Rom.* 1. 5. or being *Obedient unto the Faith*, *Act.* 6. 7. It is this Grace of God alone which *teacheth men to deny all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, to live ſoberly righteouſly and godly in this world*, ſo as to find Acceptance with God therein, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12. Wherever therefore this is rejected, renounced, forſaken, declined from by any, ſo far as it is ſo, ſo far there is and will be an *Apoſtaſie* from all other Concernments of the Goſpel. This therefore we are to enquire into. And we ſhall find in our Enquiry

quiry that all ſorts of Perſons, all Churches are and alwayes have been exceedingly prone to turn aſide from the Myſtery and Truth of the Doctrine of the Goſpel; that they have done ſo accordingly, and that thoſe which are now in the World continue to be of the ſame Temper and Inclination. And as it will appear that no evil practices are indulged unto on this Suppoſition; ſo it is deſireable that thoſe who are ſecure in this matter on ſuch Principles as wherewith they are ſatisfied, would not with too much ſeverity reflect on them who cannot but be jealous over themſelves and others. The great Apoſtle himſelf makes this the principal Ornament in the preparation of his Triumph upon the Succeſs of his Miniſtry, That he *had kept the Faith*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 6, 7, 8. *I am* (ſaith he) *ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me at that day.* Of all that made way for that Triumphant Glory which he now had a Proſpect of, he inſiſts on this onely in particular, that he had *kept the Faith*, which he did not doe without

without a ſevere Warfare and Conflict. So great a matter was that in his Eſteem, which moſt ſuppoſe ſo common, ſo eaſie, that little Diligence or Watchfulneſs is required thereunto. And the frequent ſolemn Charges with pathetical Exhortations which he gives unto his Son *Timothy* to be carefull herein, manifeſt both the weight he laid upon it, the difficulty that was in it, and the danger of miſcarriage wherewith it was attended; 1 *Tim.*6.20,21. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy truſt, avoiding profane and vain Bablings, and Oppoſitions of Science falſely ſo called; which ſome profeſſing, have erred concerning the Faith.* 2 Tim. 1.13, 14. *Hold faſt the Form of ſound words which thou haſt heard of me, in Faith and Love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep, by the Holy Ghoſt which dwelleth in us.* And the ſame Apoſtle expreſſely mentions the proneneſs of ſome to relinquiſh the Truth of the Goſpel; whom therefore he would have rebuked ſharply, that *they might be ſound in the Faith*, not giving heed to Fables and Comandments of men turning away from the Truth; *Tit.*1.13,14. Neither would there be any need that ſome ſhould earneſtly *contend for the Faith once delivered*

delivered unto the Saints, *Jude* 3. but that others are very ready to corrupt it, and turn away from it.

Examples of this *State* and Event of things among all the Churches in the world, ſince the firſt Planting of them in and by the Doctrine of the Goſpel, will give more Evidence unto the Truth of our Aſſertion, and a clear Account of that Matter of Fact whoſe Reaſons and Cauſes we are to enquire into. And becauſe I would confine my ſelf unto the full Declaration of the Myſtery of Chriſt, I ſhall not inſiſt on the Church of the *Jews* under the Old Teſtament. But it is known unto all, how from their firſt Tranſgreſſion in making the *golden Calf*, whereon as God complains they *quickly*, in a few dayes, turned out of the way, they were continually prone unto all ſorts of Apoſtaſie; And in the Iſſue, the Generality of them fell off from the Promiſe and Covenant of *Abraham* by their Unbelief, as the Apoſtle declares, *Rom.* 11. And it is to be feared, that the Appearance and Pretence of ſome *Chriſtian* Churches unto better ſucceſs, have this onely Advantage, that their Wayes and Practices are not recorded by the Spirit of God as theirs were. But I ſhall not inſiſt on that Inſtance.

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Of all the Churches that are or ever were in the World, thoſe gathered and planted by the Apoſtles themſelves, had the greateſt Advantage to know the *Myſtery* and *Truth* of the Goſpel, and the moſt forcible Reaſons unto Conſtancy and Perſeverance therein. Conſidering the *Ability* of their Teachers to reveal unto them the *whole Counſel of God*, with their *Faithfulneſs* in *with-holding nothing that was profitable unto them*; *Act.* 20; their *Authority*, as being ſent immediately by Jeſus Chriſt, and their abſolute *Infallibility* in all that they delivered; a man would rationally think that there were no room, no pretence left for any to decline in the leaſt from the Doctrine wherein they were inſtructed by them; nor any Advantage for Sathan or Seducers to practiſe upon them. There is no doubt but moſt of us ſuppoſe, that had we been ſo taught by the Apoſtles themſelves, nothing could ever tempt us to doubt or waver; much leſs to relinquiſh any Truth wherein we were ſo inſtructed. But alas! this thought is not unlike the Apprehenſion of the *rich Man* in *Hell*, who judged that if one roſe *from the Dead* to warn his Brethren, they would Repent and be Converted unto God. But

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as *Abraham* told him, if they would not *believe Moſes and the Prophets, neither would they believe ſhould one riſe from the dead*; no more would we, if we be not conſtant and ſteadfaſt in the Doctrine of the Goſpel as revealed in the Scripture, be ſo if we had been taught it by all the Apoſtles together. An Example of this proneneſs to relinquiſh Evangelical Principles we have in moſt of the Churches called and gathered by them, whoſe Faith and Practice is recorded in their writings.

The Church of *Corinth* was planted by the Apoſtle *Paul*, and watered by *Apollos* that great *Evangeliſt*; And none can queſtion but that they were fully inſtructed by them in all the Principles of the Goſpel; which is evident alſo from that Abundance of ſpiritual Gifts which above any other Church they had received. But yet within a few years, before the writing of his *firſt Epiſtle* unto them, which was not above five or ſix years at the moſt, many of them fell into that Fundamental Error of denying the *Reſurrection of the dead*, whereby they wholly annihilated, (as the Apoſtle declares) the whole Death and Reſurrection of Chriſt; rendering what ſeemed to remain of their Faith altogether vain, 1 *Cor.* 15. 13, 14, 15. The

The Churches of the *Galatians* are yet a more pregnant Inſtance. Converted they were unto the Faith of Chriſt, and planted in their Church State by the Miniſtry of the ſame Apoſtle. And although he inſtructed them *in the whole Counſel of God*, yet it may be juſtly ſuppoſed that he laboured in nothing more than to eſtabliſh them in the Knowledge and Faith of the Grace of God in Chriſt, and the free *Juſtification* of Believers by Faith in him or his Blood alone. For this he every where declareth to have been his principal Aim and Deſign in the whole Courſe of his Miniſtry. The Doctrine hereof they received with ſo much Joy and Satisfaction, that they valued the Apoſtle as *an Angel of God*, received him as *Jeſus Chriſt*, and eſteemed him above the Sight of their own eyes; *Chap.* 4. 14, 15. But yet after all this, upon a ſudden, ſo as that he was ſurprized with it and amazed at it, they fell from the Doctrine of Grace and Juſtification by Faith alone, to ſeek after Righteouſneſs as it were by the Works of the Law, *Chap.* 3. 1. *O fooliſh Galatians*, ſaith he, *who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the Truth, before whoſe Eyes Jeſus Chriſt hath been evidently ſet forth crucified among you?*

Notwithſtanding the evident Demonſtrations of the Truth which they had received, and Experience of the Power of the Word, which he mentions *verſ.* 2. yet all on a ſudden they *apoſtatized* from it. And as the Foundation hereof lay in the uncured Folly and Vanity of their Minds, (as we ſhall ſee afterwards that it doth in all alike caſes,) yet the ſtrangeneſs of the Manner of it, that it ſhould be ſo *ſudden*, and it may be *univerſal*, makes him ask if there were not ſome *ſtrange faſcination* or ſpiritual *Witchcraft* in it. So have we ſeen Perſons among our ſelves, who in a day or two have renounced all thoſe Principles of Truth wherein they have been inſtructed, and embraced a *Syſteme* of Notions *diametrically* oppoſite unto them; inſomuch as ſome have ſuppoſed that there hath been a real *diabolical* Faſcination in the Matter. Now this Apoſtaſie of the *Galatian*s was ſuch, as the Apoſtle peremptorily declares that Chriſt and all the Benefits of his Death were renounced therein.

Wherefore, although we may be troubled at it and bewayl it, that ſundry Perſons are ſo ready to fall off from the ſame Truth in the ſame Manner, yet ought we not to think ſtrange of it, or be moved by

by it; ſeeing that whole Churches *called* and *inſtructed* therein, and that particularly by the Apoſtle himſelf, did ſo fall in a ſhort time after their firſt Plantation.

It is more than probable, that thoſe who endeavoured to make *a ſpoyl* of the *Coloſſians* by *Philoſophy and vain deceit, after the Tradition of men, Chap.* 2. 8. had no ſmall ſucceſs among them. And ſuch things they were, wherewith they were attempted and beguiled, as took them off from *holding the Head*, turning them aſide unto the curious Speculations of men *vainly pufft up in their own fleſhly minds*, verſ. 18, 19. Things of the like nature may be obſerved in moſt of the other Churches unto whom the *Epiſtles* are directed.

And in thoſe unto particular Perſons, as unto *Timothy* and *Titus*, he warns them of this *Readineſs* of all ſorts of Perſons to Apoſtatize from the Truth, giving expreſs Inſtances in ſome by *Name* who had done ſo themſelves, and ſeduloully endeavoured the overthrow of the Faith of others. The Holy Apoſtle *John* lived to ſee more of theſe woſull turnings aſide from the Truth, and Relinquiſhments of Evangelical Myſteries. Hence in his Epiſtle he gives an Account expreſſely of the Apoſtaſies that

were among Profeſſors of the Goſpel, of the Seducers, and their Pretences whereby it was promoted, warning Believers of the danger thereof, and of ſundry Duties incumbent on them neceſſary to their Preſervation: And the Epiſtle of *Jude* is written to the ſame purpoſe. It is known alſo how moſt of the Churches unto whom the Lord Jeſus Chriſt granted the favour of his *Viſitation*, wherein he tried and judged their State and Condition, their Stability in, and Declenſions from the Truth, were found guilty by him as to ſome Degrees of Backſliding and Apoſtaſie, for which they were ſeverely reproved.

Certainly we can never enough admire the profound Negligence and Security of moſt Churches and Profeſſors in the world, with reſpect unto a due Adherence unto the Myſteries and Truths of the Goſpel. Some think that they have ſuch a Priviledge, as that they can never decline from them, or miſtake about them, nor have done ſo in the long Tract of Sixteen hundred years, although they have been plunged into all Manner of wickedneſs and carnal Security. Others are wanton and careleſs under their Profeſſion, making little difference between Truth and Error,

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or however ſuppoſe that it is no great Atchievement to abide in the Truth wherein they have been inſtructed. And theſe things have brought moſt Churches and Places under the Power of that Apoſtaſie which ſhall afterwards be diſcovered. But if the Churches thus planted by the Apoſtles themſelves were liable unto ſuch Defections, and many of them did actually, at leaſt for a ſeaſon, fall away from moſt important Doctrines of the Goſpel (from whence it may be they had never been recovered, if healing had not been timely applyed by *Apoſtolical* Authority and Wiſdom,) can we who have not their Advantages, nor ſome of the Evidences of the Truth which they enjoyed, having all the ſame Cauſes of Apoſtaſie *inward* and *outward* which they had to be tryed withall, expect that we ſhall be preſerved, unleſs we watchfully and carefully attend unto all the Wayes and Means whereby we may ſo be. But theſe things will be ſpoken unto afterwards.

We may in the next place enquire, What was the State of the Churches after the ending and finiſhing of the *Sacred Records*, and the death of the Apoſtles, with all other Perſons Divinely inſpired? Here

ſome would have us believe that all things were well, at leaſt for a long ſeaſon; and ſome that they are ſo to this very day. All that was believed and practiſed among them, muſt be eſteemed almoſt as Sacred as the Goſpel it ſelf, and be made a part of the Rule of our Faith and Worſhip. It ſeems thoſe very Churches which during the dayes of the Apoſtles and whileſt they were under their Inſpection, were ſo prone to miſtakes, to follow their own Imaginations, or comply with the Inventions of others, yea in ſundry Inſtances ſo as to Apoſtatize from the moſt important Doctrines of the Goſpel, were all on a ſudden, on no other Advantage but being delivered from *Apoſtolical* Care and Overſight, ſo changed, eſtabliſhed, and confirmed, that they declined not in any thing from the Truth and Rule of the Goſpel. For my part I pay as great a Reſpect and Reverence unto the Primitive Churches of the Firſt, Second, and Third *Centuries*, as I think any man living can juſtly does But that they did in nothing decline from the Grace, Myſtery, Truth, or Rule of the Goſpel, that they gave no admittance unto vain Deceits after the Tradition of Men, and the Rudiments of the World, there

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are ſuch Evidences unto the contrary, as none can believe it, but thoſe who have a great Mind it ſhould be ſo, and their Credulity at their diſpoſal. I ſhall therefore briefly enquire what was foretold that would enſue among thoſe Churches, and what came to paſs accordingly.

The Apoſtle *Paul* tells the *Elders of the Church of Epheſus* that *he knew that after his departure grievous Wolves would enter among them, not ſparing the flock*; *Act.* 20. 29. Though he compare them to *devouring Wolves*, yet are they not bloody Perſecutors by external Force that he doth intend. For that Expreſſion, *ſhall enter in among you*, denotes an Admiſſion into the Society and Converſe of the Church, under pretence of the ſame Profeſſion of Religion. They are therefore *Hereticks* and Seducers who lay in wait to Deceive through various Sleights and cunning Craftineſs, being not (whatever they pretended) really of the Church, not of the flock of Sheep, no not in Profeſſion, but devouring *Wolves*. The ſame Perſons are intended who by *Peter* are called *falſe Teachers*, ſuch as ſhould *privily bring in damnable hereſies*, *denying the Lord that bought them*, 2 *Pet.* 2. 1. But the Apoſtle

addes moreover in the next place; *Alſo of your own ſelves ſhall men ariſe ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away Diſciples after them*, verſ. 30. I do not think that the Apoſtle in that Expreſſion, *Alſo of your own ſelves*, intended preciſely any of thoſe who were then perſonally preſent with him, or at leaſt it is not neceſſary that we ſhould ſo judge; But ſome that were quickly to ſucceed in their room and Office, are intended. And all the *perverſe things* which they would teach, being contradictory to the Doctrine of the Goſpel, contained ſome degrees of Apoſtaſie in them. That they prevailed in this Attempt, that the Church was leavened and infected by them, is evident from hence, that not long after that *Church* is charged by our Saviour to be fallen in ſundry things from its firſt Purity, *Rev.* 2. 4, 5. So he aſſures *Timothy*, that the time would come, (and that ſpeedily, as appears by the Preſcription he makes for its prevention,) 2 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2. *That men would not endure ſound Doctrine, but after their own luſts ſhould heap up to themſelves Teachers, having itching ears, whereby they ſhould be turned from the Truth, and turned unto Fables*; verſ. 3, 4. A plain Prediction of that Defection from Evangelical Truth and

Purity

Purity which was to befall the Churches, and did ſo. And this with the danger of it he doth more vehemently urge, as from a Spirit of Propheſie; 1 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2. *Now the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſſely, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the Faith, giving heed to ſeducing Spirits and Doctrines of Devils.* By that Phraſe of ſpeech, *The Spirit ſpeaketh expreſſely*, the Apoſtle underſtands not a plain diſtinct Revelation made thereof unto himſelf alone, but that the infallible Spirit of God whereby himſelf and the reſt of the Apoſtles were guided, did *every where* teſtifie the ſame. It is an Expreſſion not unlike that he uſeth, *Acts* 20. 24. *The Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth in every City*; that is, in all places thoſe who were Divinely inſpired agreed on the ſame Prediction.

And I judge the Apoſtles did every where by joynt conſent acquaint the Churches, that after the Goſpel had been received and profeſſed for a while, there would enſue a *notable Apoſtaſie* from the Truth and Worſhip of it. So *Jude* tells them, *verſ.* 17, 18. *That the Apoſtles of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt told them, that in the latter dayes there ſhould be Mockers, who walk after their hearts luſts.* This All the Apoſtles

agreed

agreed in the Prediction of, and warned all the Churches concerning it. S. *John* expresseth it, 1 *Epist.* chap. 4. 3. *This is that Spirit of Antichrist whereof you have heard that it should come.* He speaks of the comeing of Antichrist, and therewithall an Apostasie from the Faith, as that which they had been fully instructed in. And the Apostle *Paul* mentioneth it as that which not onely they were forewarned of, but also acquainted with some particulars concerning it, which it was not, it may be, convenient in those dayes to mention publickly for fear of Offence; *There must* (saith he) *be a falling away*, or an Apostasie from the Faith, under the leading of the Man of Sin; *And*, saith he, *remember ye not that when I was yet with you, I told you these things, and now ye know what withholdeth*, 2 *Thess.* 2. 3, 5, 6. He had both told them of the Apostasie, and also acquainted them with *one particular* about it, which he will not now mention. This being the great Testimony of the Spirit of God in those dayes, that the *Visible Church* should so fall away from the Faith; one of the cheif Wayes whereby Sathan brought it to pass, was by the advancing of a contrary Revelation and Principle, namely, That this or that

that Church, the *Church of Rome* for instance, was Infallible and Indefectible, and could never *fall away* from the Faith. By this Means he obliterated out of the Minds of Men the former Warnings given by the Spirit unto the Churches, so rendring them secure, defeating the Ends of the Prediction: For hereby he not onely lead men insensibly into the greatest Apostasie, but taught them to adhere invincibly unto what they had done, and with the highest Confidence to justifie themselves therein. But all those and many other Warnings did the Holy Ghost give concerning the *Defection* from the Mystery of the Gospel, which the Churches would in succeeding times fall into, which being neglected by secure Professors whilest their Faith was weakened and undermined by innumerable Artifices, issued in their Apostasie. For these things being thus expressely foretold by the Spirit of God himself, we may briefly enquire into the Event of the Predictions mentioned, and whether indeed they came to pass or no?

An Account in general of the state of the Church after the dayes of the Apostles we have given us by *Hegesippus*, who lived

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in the next Age after them, as his words are recorded by *Euſebius*, *lib.* 3. *cap.* 20. Relating the Martyrdom of *Simon* the Son of *Cleopas*, he addes; *Unto theſe times the Church continued a pure and incorrupted Virgin; thoſe who endeavoured to corrupt the Rule of ſaving Truth, where any ſuch were, lying hid in obſcurity. But after that the holy Company of the Apoſtles came to their ſeveral Ends, and that Generation was paſt who heard the Divine Wiſdome with their own ears, a Conſpiracy of wicked Error by the Seductions of thoſe that taught ſtrange Doctrines began to take place; and where none of the Apoſtles were remaining, they began to ſet up their Science falſely ſo called with open face, againſt the Preaching of the Truth.* We have already ſeen that there were many Declenſions in the dayes of the Apoſtles themſelves; But as they were jealous over all the Churches with Godly Jealouſie, (for having *eſpouſed them to one Husband*, they took care to preſent them as *a chaſte Virgin* unto Chriſt, (the words which *Hegeſippus* alludes unto) and thereon watched againſt all Wayes and Means whereby as *the Serpent beguiled Eve through his ſubtilty, leaſt their Minds ſhould be corrupted from the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt*, by the teach-

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ing of other Doctrines than what they had received from them, as *Paul* ſpeaks, 2 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3, 4.) ſo by their Wiſdom, Diligence and Watchfulneſs, they were for the moſt part ſoon reduced from their Wandrings, and recovered from their Miſtakes. Hence this holy Man pronounceth the Church a *pure Virgin* during the dayes of the Apoſtles and their Inſpection, at leaſt comparatively as to what enſued thereon. For immediately after he acknowledgeth that they were much corrupted and defiled, that is, fallen off from *the ſimplicity that is in Chriſt*, intending probably thoſe very things wherein after-Ages made them their Example. For things quickly came unto that ſtate in the world, and which yet with the moſt continueth therein, that men deſire no greater Warranty for their Practice in Religion, than the ſhaddow or Appearance of any thing that was in uſe or prevailed among thoſe Churches, though themſelves therein went off evidently from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt.

This Account and unqueſtionable Teſtimony we have in general of the Accompliſhment of the Predictions before mentioned concerning a Declenſion that was to enſue from the Power, Purity and Simplicity

plicity of the Goſpel. But whatever is here intended, it muſt be looked on as the very Beginning and Entrance of the Apoſtaſie that enſued, which can ſcarce be taken notice of in compariſon of that Exceſs which it quickly proceeded unto. In particular, the parts of the Sacred Predictions mentioned, may be reduced unto four heads. (1.) *Men from among themſelves ſpeaking perverſe things.* (2.) *Grievous Wolves entring in, not ſparing the Flock.* (3.) Wearineſs, and not *enduring of ſound Doctrine*, but turning the mind unto Fables, and from the Truth. (4.) A Gradual ſecret myſterious Work of a *general Apoſtaſie* in the whole viſible Church. And it might be eaſily demonſtrated by Inſtances, how all theſe had their particular Accompliſhment, untill the whole Apoſtaſie foretold was formed and compleated. We may give ſome ſhort remarks upon them all.

(1) It cannot be denyed, but that many of the principal Teachers in the firſt Ages of the Church after the Apoſtles, eſpecially among thoſe whoſe Writings remain unto Poſterity, did in a Neglect of the Goſpel and its Simplicity, embrace and teach ſundry things *perverſe*, curious, and contrary

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to the form of wholsome words committed unto them; whilest for any thing that appears, they were not so duely conversant in Evangelical Mysteries with Reverence and godly Fear, as it was their Duty to have been. It is known how instances hereof might be multiplyed out of the Writings of *Justin Martyr*, *Irenæus*, *Clemens*, *Origen*, *Tatianus*, *Athenagoras*, *Tertullian*, *Lactantius* and others. But I shall not reflect with any Severity on their Names and Memories who continued to adhere unto the Fundamental Principles of Christian Religion, though what by curious Speculations, what by *Philosophical* Prejudices and Notions, by wrested *Allegorical Expositions* of Scripture, by Opinions openly false and contradictory to the Word of God, they much corrupted and debased the pure and holy Doctrine of Jesus and his Apostles.

(2) The *grievous Wolves* foretold of, who were to *spoyl the Flock*, I look on as *Hereticks* in their various Kinds. And on this Account it would seem to exceed all Belief, what multitudes and Sholes of all sorts of Persons fell off from the Mystery and Truth of the Gospel, after they had been declared unto them and professed by

them; which is a full Confirmation of the Aſſertion before laid down. But they may in general be reduced unto two heads.

1. Of thoſe who in a Regardleſneſs and Contempt of the Goſpel which they had received and profeſſed, fell away into fooliſh extravagant heatheniſh Imaginations, unintelligible endleſs fancies, for the moſt part (as is ſuppoſed) accompanyed with wicked Practices, whereby although they would retain the Name of Chriſtians, they compleatly and abſolutely fell off from Chriſt and his Goſpel. Such were the *Gnoſticks* in all their Branches, and under their ſeveral Appellations, *Marcionites*, *Manichees*, and others almoſt innumerable, with whoſe Names, Riſe, Opinions, and Courſe of Lives, *Epiphanius*, *Auſtin* and *Phylaſtrius* have filled up their Catalogues. It may be ſaid they were all of them Perſons of ſo great Abominations that they deſerve no conſideration among ſuch as own Chriſtian Religion. But the greater the Abominations were which they fell into, the more wilde, ſenceleſs and wicked were their Imaginations, conſidering the multitudes of profeſſed Chriſtians which fell into them, the more effectual is the

Teſtimony

Teſtimony they give unto the Truth of our Aſſertion. For were there not an inexpreſſible proneneſs in the Minds of men, to relinquiſh the Myſtery of the Goſpel, was it not promoted by unutterable Folly and ſecret Enmity againſt the Truth, would it have been poſſible that ſo early in the Church, taking date immediately from the deceaſe of the Apoſtles, ſuch multitudes of profeſſed Chriſtians, ſhould openly renounce thoſe ſacred Truths, for ſuch noxious fooliſh Imaginations? Theſe are they who are expreſſely propheſied of, that they ſhould *bring in damnable hereſies, denying the Lord that bought them, bringing on themſelves ſwift deſtruction; many following their pernicious wayes, by reaſon of whom the way of Truth was evil ſpoken of*; 2 *Pet.* 2. 1, 2. For all their impious Opinions and practiees were by the Heathen objected unto, and charged on *Chriſtian Religion*, as is evident in *Origens* Reply to *Celſus*, among others; and ſo by reaſon of them *the way of Truth* was *evil ſpoken of.*

2. There was another ſort of *Hereſies* and ſo of real Apoſtaſie from the Myſtery of the Goſpel, whoſe Authors and Followers yet pretended an Adherence unto and Profeſſion thereof. And theſe may be re-

duced to two heads: (1) Concerning the *Perſon*, and (2) concerning the *Grace* of Chriſt. Of the firſt ſort the principal and moſt prevalent was that of the *Arrians*, in denying his *Deity*; the latter that of the *Pelagians* in oppoſing his *Satisfaction*, *Merit*, and *Grace*. The firſt of theſe was poured out as a Flood from the mouth of the Old Serpent, and bare all before it like a Torrent; the latter inſinuated it ſelf as Poyſon into the very Vitals of the Church. The firſt as a *burning Fever* carryed preſent Death with it and before it; the latter as a *Gangrene* or *Hectical diſtemper* inſenſibly conſumed the vital Spirits of Religion. In the firſt we have a moſt wofull Evidence of the *Inſtability* of Profeſſors, and their Readineſs to forgoe the ſaving Myſteries of the Goſpel. For in little more than half an Age after its firſt Riſe, the generality of Chriſtians in the world, *Biſhops*, *Prieſts* and *People* fell under the Power of it, and in their publick Confeſſions renounced and denyed the true eternal Deity of the Son of God. For having obtained the Patronage of ſome Emperours, as *Conſtantius* and *Valence*, and the ſuffrage of innumerable Prelates, who joyntly promoted this *Hereſie* by Force and Fraud; almoſt

almoſt the whole world as to outward Profeſſion was for a ſeaſon lead into this Apoſtaſie, wherein ſome whole Nations, (as the *Goths* and *Vandals*,) continued for ſundry Ages afterward. And for the latter, or *Pelagianiſme*, it ſecretly, ſubtilly and gradually ſo inſinuated it ſelf into the Minds of men, that for the Subſtance of it, it continues to be no ſmall part of that Religion which the generality of Chriſtians doe at this day profeſs, and is yet upon a prevalent progreſs in the World. This is the Second way of the Apoſtaſie of Profeſſors which was foretold by the Holy Ghoſt, which ſo came to paſs as that the wounds which Chriſtianity received thereby are not healed unto this day.

(3) Another way was, that men ſhould grow *weary of ſound Doctrine*, and not being able, for the Reaſons afterwards to be inſiſted on, to endure it any longer, ſhould hearken after *Fables*, and be turned away from the Truth. And this no leſs eminently came to paſs than any of the former. About the third Century it was that *Monkiſh Fables* began to be broached in the world. And this ſort of men, inſtead of the Doctrines of the Grace of God, of Juſtification by the Blood of Chriſt, of

Faith and Repentance, of New Obedience and walking before God according to the Commands of Chriſt and Rule of the Goſpel, which men grew weary of and could not well longer endure, filled their Minds, and ſatisfied their *itching Ears*, with ſtories of Dreams and Viſions, of Angelical Perfection in themſelves, of ſelf-invented Devotions, of uncommanded Mortifications, and a thouſand other fooliſh Superſtitions. By ſuch *Fables* were innumerable Souls turned from the Truth and Simplicity of the Goſpel, thinking that in theſe things alone Religion conſiſted, deſpiſing the whole Doctrine of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles in compariſon of them. Theſe are particularly propheſied of and declared, 1 *Tim.*4. 1, 2, 3. By the Hypocriſie, and Lyes, fabulous Stories and Doctrines of Devils of this ſort of men, the Body of the Chriſtian people was ſo leavened and infected with the Belief of vain Deluſions, and the Practice of fooliſh Superſtitions, that little or nothing was left ſound or wholſome among them.

(4) Laſtly, the ſecret working of the *Myſtery of Iniquity*, in, under, and by all theſe wayes and other Artifices innumerable, which the ſubtilty of Sathan, with the

the Vanity of the Minds and Luſts of the Hearts of Men made uſe of, wrought out that fatal Apoſtaſie which the World groaned under and was ruined by, when it came unto its height in the Papacy. The Riſe and Progreſs of this Catholick Defection, the Wayes, Means and Degrees of its Procedure, its ſucceſſefull Advance in ſeveral Ages, have been ſo diſcovered and laid open by many, ſo far as the Nature of ſo myſterious a Work is capable of a Diſcovery in this World, that I ſhall not need to repeat here any Inſtance of it. In brief, the Doctrine of the Goſpel was ſo depraved, and the Worſhip of it ſo far corrupted, that the Waters of the Sanctuary ſeemed like the River *Jordan* to run and iſſue in a Dead Sea, or like thoſe of *Ægypt*, to be turned into Blood, that would yield no Refreſhment unto the Souls of Men. So was that Prophetical Parable of our Saviour fulfilled; *Luke* 19. 12, 13, 14, 15, *&c.*

Before I proceed to particulars among our ſelves in this kind, I ſhall yet further confirm our Aſſertion in general, by the Conſideration of the Second Venture (if I may ſo ſay,) that God gave the Goſpel in the World, the Second Trial which he

hath made of many Churches and Nations, and what hath been the Event and Succeſs thereof.

During the ſeaſon ſpoken of, the Church was *driven into the Wilderneſs*, as to its viſible Profeſſion, where it was ſecretly nouriſhed by the Spirit and Word of God, and the few Witneſſes unto the Truth which yet remained, propheſied in Sackcloth, oft-times ſealing their Teſtimony (whereby the World was diſquieted and tormented) with their Blood. But when the time came that God would again graciouſly viſit the remnant of his Inheritance, he ſtirred up, gifted, and enabled many faithful Servants of Chriſt, by whom the work of Reformation was ſucceſſefully begun and carried on in many Nations and Churches. It is true, they arrived not therein at the Purity and Peace of the Apoſtolical Churches, nor was it by ſome of them abſolutely aimed at. And this quickly manifeſted it ſelf by the great differences that were among them both in Doctrine and Worſhip, whereon thoſe mutual Conteſts and Diviſions enſued, which proved the principal Means of obſtructing the Progreſs of their whole Work, and continueth to do ſo to this very day. But a ſtate of a bleſſed and

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uſefull Recovery it was from that Apoſtaſie into Errors, Hereſies, Superſtitions and Idolatries, which the whole profeſſing Church of theſe parts of the World was fallen into. And many wayes did it manifeſt it ſelf ſo to be.

For, (1) The *Doctrine* taught by them generally, was *agreeable to the Scripture*, which they ſtrenuouſly vindicated from the Corruptions of the foregoing Apoſtaſie, and the Worſhip of the Churches was freed from open Idolatry.

(2) The *Conſciences* of men preſſed harraſed and diſtorted with innumerable vain Affrightments, Superſtitions, fooliſh Imaginations, and falſe Opinions, whereby they were *brought into bondage* to their pretended Guides of all ſorts, and forced unto Services under the Name of *Religious Duties*, merely ſubſervient unto their carnal Intereſts, were *ſet at liberty* by the Truth, and directed into the wayes of Goſpel Obedience.

(3) Multitudes had it *given unto them* on the behalf of Chriſt, not onely to *believe* in him but alſo to *ſuffer* for him, ſo that no leſs numbers ſealed their Teſtimony with their Blood, under the Power of thoſe who undertook the Patronage of the

preſent Apoſtaſie, than did under the Rage of the Heathens at the firſt introduction of Chriſtian Religion into the world.

(4) The *Fruit* which it hath brought forth in many Nations by the *real Converſion* of multitudes to God, their Edification and holy Obedience, their ſolid ſpiritual Conſolation in Life and Death, with many other things, do give Teſtimony unto this Work that it was of God.

It cannot therefore be denyed, but that many Churches were by the Reformation brought into a ſtate of *Revaleſcency* or Recovery from that mortal Diſeaſe they had been under the Power of. But all men know what Care and Diligence is required to attain perfect Health and Soundneſs in ſuch a Condition, and to prevent a Relapſe, which if it ſhould fall out, the laſt Error would be worſe than the firſt. It might therefore have been juſtly expected from them, and it was their Duty to have gone on in the work of Reformation untill they had come to a perfect Recovery of ſpiritual Health. But inſtead thereof things are ſo fallen out, by whoſe default God knows, that not onely the work hath received little or no Improvement among themſelves in the Encreaſe of Light, Truth

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and Holineſs, nor been progreſſive or ſucceſſefull in the world towards others, but alſo hath viſibly and apparently loſt its force, and gone backwards on all Accounts. Wherefore we have here alſo another ſad Evidence of the proneneſs of men to forego the Truths of the Goſpel, after they have been inſtructed in them. I ſhall inſtance onely in the known Doctrines of the *Reformed Churches*, aiming eſpecially at what is of late years fallen out among our ſelves, in a ſort of men whom the preceding Generations were unacquainted withall, which I ſhall therefore inſiſt on apart and by it ſelf afterwards.

It is not unknown how ready many, yea multitudes are in all places to deſert the whole Proteſtant Faith and Religion, caſting themſelves into the baffled proſtituted Remainders of the old Apoſtaſie. Every ſlight Occaſion, every Temptation of Pleaſure, Profit, Favour, Preferment, turns men unto the *Papacy*; and ſome run the ſame courſe merely to comply with the Vanity of their Minds in Curioſity, Novelty, and Conformity unto what is in faſhion among men. Some fly unto it as a Sanctuary from Guilt, as that which tendereth more ready wayes for the Pacification of Conſcience than

than that Faith and Repentance which the Goſpel doth require. Some having loſt the ſence of all Religion in the purſuit of their Luſts, finding themſelves uneaſie in their Atheiſme, or diſadvantaged by the Reputation of it, take ſhelter in the *Roman* Dreſs. Some are really entangled and overcome by the power and ſubtilty of numerous Seducers, who lye in wait to deceive. By one way and Means or another, on Motives known to themſelves and him who uſeth them as his Engines to ſubvert the Faith, many in all places fall off daily to the *Papacy*, and the old Superſtition ſeems to be upon a new Advance, ready to receive another Edition in the world. Yea, it is to be feared, that there is in many places ſuch a general Inclination unto a Defection, or ſuch an Indifferency to all Religion, that multitudes want nothing but a Captain to conduct them back into *Ægypt*. For whereas they have loſt all ſence of the Power, Uſe, and Excellency of that Religion or Profeſſion of Truth wherein they have been educated and inſtructed, and that by giving up themſelves unto their Luſts and Pleaſures, which will not fail to produce that curſed Effect, they either embrace the *Roman Religion*, to ſupply the place

place of that, no Religion which they had left unto themſelves; or if they pretend to ſoar to ſuch a Pitch of Reaſon as to diſown the vanity and folly of that Profeſſion, and its inconſiſtency with all the Principles of free generous and rational Minds, they betake themſelves for a while unto a kind of *Sceptical Atheiſme*, which having given them a ſorry talkative Entertainment for a little ſpace, by debaſing and corrupting their Minds, gives them up again unto what they did before deſpiſe. By ſuch Means are the Numbers of Apoſtates multiplyed amongſt us every day.

But there are yet other Inſtances of the proneneſs of Men in forgoing the Faith that the *Church* was retrived unto at the firſt Reformation. How great an Inroad hath been made on our firſt profeſſion, at leaſt an Alteration made therein, (whether for *better* or for *worſe* the great Day will diſcover,) by that *Syſteme* of Doctrines which from its Author, and for diſtinctions ſake is called *Arminianiſme!* I am not bound to believe what *Polinburgh* affirms in his Preface to the Second Part of *Epiſcopius* his works; namely, That the moſt of the Prelates and Learned men in *England* are of their way and Judgement, which as

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ſtated by *Epiſcopius* hath many *Racovian* Additions made unto what it was at firſt. Nay, I do believe that what he aſſerts is falſe and calumnious unto the Perſons he intends. But yet I wiſh withall that too much countenance were not given by many unto his Inſinuation.

A late Writer in *a Treatiſe* which he calls *A ſober and compaſſionate Enquiry*, &c. among other things of the like nature, fancieth that ſome diſlike the Church of *England* on the Account of its Doctrine. And this they doe as he farther ſuppoſeth, becauſe it doth *not ſo punctually agree with the Synod of* Dort *as they could wiſh.* To evidence the unreaſonableneſs hereof, he informs us, That *no one Father or Writer of the Church, whether Greek or Latine, before St.* Auſtins *time agreed in Doctrine with the Determinations of that Synod. And as for St.* Auſtin *he was a devout Good man, but whoſe Piety was far more commendable than his Reaſon. And therefore rejects it with Indignation* (as well he may) *that a Novel* Dutch *Synod ſhould preſcribe Doctrine to the Church of* England, *and outweigh all Antiquity*; and ſo cloſeth his Diſcourſe with ſome unworthy Calumnies caſt on the Divines of that Aſſembly, which were eſteemed

eſteemed of the beſt that all the Reformed Churches of *Europe* (that of *France* alone excepted) could afford at that time.

But the Intereſt of the preſent Deſign which he had in hand, was more regarded in theſe Aſſertions than that of the Truth. It is but a pretence, that thoſe whom he reflects upon do diſlike *the Doctrine* of the Church of *England*. For look upon it as it is contained in the *Articles of Religion*, in the *Books of Homelies*, and declared in the Authenticated Writings of all the Learned Prelates and others for *Sixty years* after the Reformation, wherein the Doctrine taught, approved and confirmed in this Church, was teſtified unto all the world; and the generality of thoſe reflected on by him, do ſacredly adhere unto it. It is a Defection from this Doctrine that is by ſome complained of, and not the Doctrine it ſelf. And how the Doctrine of the Perſon before mentioned, or of *Curcellæus*, of whoſe works *Limburgh* in his Preface unto them boaſts, that they were ſo earneſtly deſired in *England*, can be brought into a conſiſtency with that of this Church ſo confirmed and declared, will require a ſingular faculty in the Reconciliation of open multiplyed contradictions, and thoſe in the

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moſt weighty points of Religion, to declare. Let but the Doctrine eſtabliſhed at the firſt Reformation, as explained and declared in the Writings of the principal Perſons who preſided, lived and died in the Communion of this Church, which are the Meaſure of it in the judgement of all other Churches in the World, be continued and adhered unto, and there will be neither difference nor complaint in this Matter. For the Diſputes which have been, and which it may be alwayes will be among Learned men, concerning ſome Abſtruſe and Philoſophical Notions about the Order of the divine Decrees, Predetermination, the Nature of Humane Liberty, and the like innumerable, neither ever did or ever will much diſturb the Peace of the Church. For as they are underſtood by very few, if by any at at all, ſo the Community of Chriſtians are altogether unconcerned with them, either as to their Faith or Obedience. Differences about them will be ended at the laſt day, and it may be as to the great End of the Goſpel, that is time enough.

But the pretence of this Author, that *no one Father or Writer of the Church, Greek or Latine, before St.* Auſtins *time agreed with*

with the Determination of the Synod of Dort, is of little importance in this Cauſe. For as I ſuppoſe he may not ſpeak this abſolutely on his own Trial and Experience, but rather on the ſuggeſtions of others, ſo it is no more than what is ſtrongly pretended concerning the *Doctrine of the Holy Trinity it ſelf* with reſpect unto the Determination and Declaration made of it at the Councel of *Nice*. And it were to be wiſhed that too much countenance had not been given unto this Imagination, by *Petavius* and ſome others, whoſe Collections of ambiguous Expreſſions out of the ancient Writers of the Church, and Obſervations upon them, are highly boaſted in by our preſent *Photinians*. And as it may be it will not be eaſie for this Author poſitively to declare what was the judgement of *any one ancient Writer* in all points of Chriſtian Belief, eſpecially in ſuch as had not received an eſpecial Diſcuſſion from Oppoſitions made unto them in their own dayes, or before them; ſo it is confeſſed by all, that an Allowance is to be given unto general Expreſſions of ſuch Writers as ſeem occaſionally to declare their preſent thoughts in any particular Doctrines, about which there had never been any Controverſie in the Church.

Church. For the proper ſignification of words themſelves, whereby men expreſs their Minds, is never exactly ſtated, untill the things themſelves which they would ſignifie, have been thoroughly diſcuſſed. Hence the ſame words have had various Uſes and diverſe Significations in ſeveral Ages. And by this Rule, whatever be ſuppoſed that none of the Ancients before *Auſtin* were of the ſame Mind with thoſe who aſſembled at *Dort*, it may with more Truth be affirmed, that none of them were otherwiſe minded but *Origen* onely, and thoſe who were influenced by him, he being by many, on evident grounds, accuſed to have prepared the way and opened the door both unto *Arianiſme* and *Pelagianiſme*.

The Cenſure paſſed on *Auſtin*, namely, That *his Piety was far more commendable than his Reaſon*, is at leaſt as *novel* as the *Dutch Synod*. For it is not the Commendation of his Piety, but the Diſparagement of his Reaſon that is intended. And I muſt take the liberty to ſay, that either this Author hath not been much converſant in the Writings of this great and holy Perſon, or he is a very incompetent Judge of the *rational Abilities* of them in whoſe

Writings

Writings he is converſant. This Confidence in pronouncing a Cenſure ſo contrary to the concurrent ſence of the generality of Learned men of all ſorts in the Church for Twelve hundred years, ſavours too much of Partiality and Prejudice. But it is ſome relief, that the Adverſaries of the Truth with whom he had to doe, were never able to diſcover nor make advantage of the weakneſs of his Reaſon. It was ſufficient for the work whereunto God deſigned him, which was not only to check and ſuppreſs the many Inſtances wherein ſundry crafty Perſons apoſtatized from the Truths of the Goſpel, both in his own dayes and before; but alſo to give over the Light of Truth clearly diſcovered and ſtrenuouſly vindicated, unto Poſterity, for the Benefit of the Church in all Ages. Perſons may freely deſpiſe the men of their preſent Conteſts, againſt whom they have all the Advantages which may prompt them thereunto; and they have ſo much countenance in caſting contemptuous Reflections on the principal firſt Reformers, as not to think therein they invade the bounds of Chriſtian Modeſty. But what will be the Apology for their Confidence in ſuch cenſures of the Rational Abilities of *Auſtin*, I can-

not conjecture, though the Reaſon of it I can eaſily gueſs at. However it needeth not be much taken notice of, ſeeing a Cenſure ſomewhat more ſevere hath not long ſince been paſſed on St. *Paul* himſelf by a Writer of the ſame ſtrain and judgement.

There is little Ground of Fear as I ſuppoſe, that *a novel Dutch Synod*, (as it is called) though conſiſting of Perſons delegated from all the principal Reformed Churches of *Europe*, (that of *France* onely excepted) *ſhould preſcribe Doctrines to the Church of England*; ſeeing in that Synod the Church of *England* did rather preſcribe Doctrines to the *Dutch*, than receive any from them. For the Divines which had the preheminence of Suffrage and Authority in that Aſſembly, were thoſe of the Church of *England*, ſent thither by publick Authority to teſtifie the Doctrine of this Church, and to lead the *Dutch* into the ſame Confeſſion with themſelves.

But to return, it is to be feared that leſt as *Pelagianiſme* in its firſt Edition did ſecretly and gradually inſinuate it ſelf into the Animal and vital Spirits of the Body of the Church in thoſe dayes, proving a Poyſon unto it; ſo that under its new Varniſh

niſh and gilding it will be received, untill it diffuſe it ſelf into the Veins and Vitals of the preſent Reformed Church-ſtate in the World. This I know, that ſome pretending a Zeal for Holineſs and Reformation of Life, do yet with a ſhamefull Partiality charge thoſe Doctrines as a principal means of the *Decay of Piety*, which they cannot but know were generally believed and avowed then when *Piety* moſt flouriſhed in this Nation. But this is part of that Entertainment which the *Church of England* meets with at this day from her degenerate Offspring. The Doctrine of all the ancient Biſhops muſt be traduced as the *Means* of the *Decay of Piety*. And which encreaſeth the wonder, it had not this Effect till it began to be publickly deſerted and renounced. For whether they are the one the Cauſe of the other or no, yet there is a demonſtrative Coincidence between the Originals of our viſible Apoſtaſie from *Piety*, and the Admiſſion of theſe *novel Opinions* contrary to the Faith of the firſt Reformed Churches, and that they both bear the ſame date among us.

But there is yet a greater Abomination effectually taking place among us, to the utter Overthrow of the Faith of ſome,

and the corrupting of the Minds of others from the Truth of the Goſpel. This is the *Leproſie* of *Socinianiſme*, which ſecretly enters into the Walls and Timber of the Houſe, whence it will not be ſcraped out. It commenced in the world ſome time before the other ſpring of a *partial* Apoſtaſie before mentioned. But for a good ſpace it lay fermenting in ſome obſcure places of *Poland* and the Countreys adjacent. When the Books and Writings of the Authors and Promoters of the Opinions called by that Name came once to be known and read in other places, they were continually all of them abundantly anſwered and confuted by Learned men of all ſorts, ſo as it was juſtly hoped it would obtain no great ſucceſs or progreſs in the world. But

Latius exciſæ ſerpit contagio gentis
Victoreſq; ſuos natio victa premit.

The Vanity of the Minds of Men, their wearineſs of ſound Doctrine which they will endure no longer whatever they embrace, have given it admiſſion either in part or in whole, among multitudes who once profeſſed the Faith of the Goſpel. For whereas the whole *Syſteme* of the Opi-

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nions of thoſe men is but a Collection of ſuch Errors as formerly perplexed the Church, and overthrew the Faith of many, the principal and moſt material of them may be referred unto two heads: (1) *Photinianiſme*, and (2) *Pelagianiſme*. Unto the firſt are referred their denyal of the *Trinity*, and conſequently of the Divine *Perſon* and *Incarnation* of the Son of God. Under the latter, their Oppoſition unto the *Satisfaction* of Chriſt, the true Nature of his *Prieſthood* and Sacrifice, *Juſtification* by Faith in his Blood, and the *Imputation* of his Righteouſneſs, of the Efficacy of his *Grace*, and the Corruption of our *Natures* by the Fall, may be comprized. The denyal of the *Reſurrection* of the ſame Bodies, the *Eternity* of the Puniſhment of the Damned in Hell, with other of their Imaginations, were alſo traduced from ſome of Old. The firſt part of their Hereſie as yet takes no great place but onely among themſelves, the Doctrine oppoſite unto it being ſecured by Law, and the Intereſt of men thereon who have Advantage by the publick Profeſſion. But yet it is to be feared, that the *Coldneſs* of many in aſſerting and defending thoſe Fundamental Doctrines of the Goſpel which they oppoſe, yea their

Indifferency about them, and the horrid Notions with ſtrange Expoſitions that ſome have embraced and do uſe concerning the *Perſon of Chriſt*, do proceed from ſome ſecret Influence on the Minds of Men which the venome of their Opinions and *Sophiſtical* Diſputes have had upon them. And from a juſt improvement of their Sentiments have proceeded thoſe bold Efforts of Atheiſtical Imaginations and Oppoſitions unto the Scripture, both the Letter and ſence of it, which have of late been divulged in publick Writings, which being brought from the neighbour Nation, do find no ſlack entertainment by many among us.

But as to the latter branch of their Profeſſion, or their *Pelagianiſme*, it hath diffuſed it ſelf among multitudes of Perſons who were ſometimes of another Perſwaſion, and have yet Engagements on them ſo to be. All that unreaſonable Advancement of Reaſon in Matters of Religion which we have amongſt us, the new Notions men have of the *Satisfaction* of Chriſt, pretending to the Acknowledgement of it, indeed deſtructive unto it, the noyſome Conceptions of the little uſe of the Perſon of Chriſt in Religion beyond the Revela-

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tion and Confirmation of the Goſpel; Doctrines of the Poſſibility yea Facility of yielding Acceptable Obedience unto all Evangelical Commands without the Aids of Effectual Grace; of the Powers and Incorruption of our Natures; of Juſtification by and upon our own Obedience; of the ſuitableneſs of all Goſpel Myſteries to unrenewed Reaſon or an unſanctified Mind; of Regeneration as conſiſting only in the Reformation of our Lives; with a Rejection of all internal real Efficacy in converting Grace, and the Subſtitution of Morality in the room of Grace; with the denyal of any influences of Grace from Jeſus Chriſt unto the Holineſs of Truth; and many other Opinions wherewith men even pride themſelves to the Contempt of the Doctrine received and eſtabliſhed in the Reformed Churches of Old, are borrowed out of the Store-houſes of their Imaginations, ſhall I ſay, or raked out of their Dunghill. And whither the Infection may diffuſe it ſelf, I know not; The Reſurrection of the ſame Bodies ſubſtantially, the Subſiſtence and acting of the Soul in its ſeparate ſtate and Condition, the Eternity of Hell Torments, the Nature of Chriſts Sacerdotal Office as diſtinguiſhed from his

Regal, begin to be either queſtioned or very faintly defended amongſt many. And many other noyſome Opinions there are, about the *Scriptures*, the *Nature of God*, his *Attributes* and *Decrees*, the *two Covenants*, our *Union with Chriſt*, the *Gifts* and *Operations* of the *Spirit*, which ſome vent as pure Myſteries and Diſcoveries of Truth, and value themſelves for being the Authors or Maintainers of them, that came all from the ſame Forge, or are Emanations from the ſame corrupt Fountain of *Socinianiſme*.

We have as I ſuppoſe ſufficiently demonſtrated the Truth of what we before obſerved, concerning the *Proneneſs* and *Readineſs of Mankind to relinquiſh and fall off from the Myſtery and Doctrine of the Goſpel, after it hath been declared unto them, and received by them.* Withall we have ſtated the Matter of Fact, namely, That ſuch a *Defection* there hath been, and is in the world at this day; the Reaſons and Cauſes whereof we are now to enquire into. Onely I muſt premiſe, That the principal Inſtance deſigned, and which is among our ſelves, I have referred to an eſpecial Conſideration by it ſelf, wherein we ſhall enquire into the eſpecial Reaſons of it, which are ſuperadded unto thoſe more general, which equally reſpect Apoſtaſies of this kind.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Reaſons and Cauſes of Apoſtaſie from the Truth or Doctrine of the Goſpel, and the Inclination of all ſorts of Perſons thereunto in all Ages, enquired into and declared. Uncured Enmity in the Minds of many againſt Spiritual Things, and the Effects of it in a wicked Converſation, the firſt Cauſe of Apoſtaſie.

FOR an Entrance into the enſuing Diſcourſe, I ſhall lay down that Principle which I preſume all men will give their aſſent unto; namely, *That a Defection from the Truth of the Goſpel once profeſſed, is a ſin of the higheſt Guilt, and that which will iſſue in the moſt pernicious Events.* God himſelf did frequently complain by his Prophets of Old, that his People *had forſaken him*, and were gone away from him; that is, the Doctrine and Inſtitutions of his Law, the onely Means of Conjunction and Communion between him and them. *Deut.* 28.20. 1 *Sam.* 8.8. 2 *Chron.* 34, 25.

34. 25. *Jerem.* 5. 7. 19. *Chap.* 16. 11. To convince them of their horrible Folly and Iniquity herein, he demands of them, *What Iniquity they had ſeen in him, what Inequality in his Wayes, what Diſappointments they had met withall, that they ſhould grow weary of his Laws and Worſhip,* ſo as to relinquiſh them for ſuch things and wayes as would end in their their Temporal and Eternal Ruine, *Jer.* 2. 5. *Ezek.* 18. 25. For if there were nothing in them whereof they had cauſe to complain, if they were all Holy Juſt and Good, if in the Obſervance of them there was great Reward, if by them God did them Good and not Evil all their dayes, there was *no Apology* or Excuſe to be made for their Folly and Ingratitude. That ſo it was with them, that their Defection from the Law and Inſtitutions of God, was the higheſt Folly and greateſt Wickedneſs imaginable, is by all acknowledged; yea it will be ſo by them who at the ſame time are under a greater Guilt of the ſame kind. For the Judgements of men are oft-times ſo bribed by their preſent Intereſts, or corrupted by the Power of depraved Affections, as to juſtifie themſelves in worſer Evils than thoſe which they condemn in others.

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But as it was with the People of Old, ſo it is at preſent with them who decline from the *Myſteries* or renounce the *Doctrines* of the Goſpel, after they have been received and profeſſed by them, or have done ſo at any time. Yea, their Guilt hath greater Aggravations than accompanyed the Idolatrous Revolts of the *Jews* of Old. For the Goſpel is a clearer Revelation of God, and much more Glorious than that which was made by the Law. There is therefore no Reaſon to be taken from it ſelf, why men ſhould deſert it, either in its Doctrines and Precepts, or the Worſhip which it doth require. Nothing can be charged on the Goſpel, nothing on any thing contained in it or produced by it, which ſhould countenance any in a Defection from them. It is in it ſelf a bleſſed Emanation from the Eternal Fountain of Wiſdom and Truth; and hath more Impreſſions and Characters upon it of Divine Excellencies, than the whole Creation beſides. Neither hath it any proper Operations or Effects on the Souls of Men, but what are Means and Cauſes of deliverance from their Original Apoſtaſie from God, with all the Evil that enſued thereon, which is all that is evil. For the Recovery of loſt Mankind from a ſtate of

Darkneſs,

Darkneſs, Bondage and Miſery, into that of Liberty Light and Peace, the preſent Favour and future Enjoyment of God, with Order and mutual Uſefulneſs in this World whileſt they continue therein, is the great and immediate Deſign of the Truths of the Goſpel. Neither is there any thing that is truely good, holy, juſt, benign or uſefull among men, but what is influenced by them, and derived from them. Some there have been indeed, (perhaps in all Ages,) who pretending unto the Liberty of it, have really been Servants of Corruption, and have turned the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs. And ſome have charged the principal Doctrines of it, as thoſe which give men a Diſcharge from a Neceſſity of holy Obedience, and the utmoſt uſe of their own Endeavours therein. And there are thoſe who being given up to Senſuality of Life, living under the Power of Darkneſs in the purſuit of ſecular Ends, who have no other thoughts of it but what the Devils in the poſſeſſed Man had of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that it comes to *torment them before their time*. And there are not wanting ſome who fear no Evil but from the Goſpel; who ſuppoſe, that the Minds of all men would be ſerene and peaceable, that

that all things would be quiet, flouriſhing and orderly in the World, if the Goſpel were out of it. For whatever Diſturbances men make themſelves, in Envy, Wrath, Malice, Perſecution of others, the Guilt and Blame of them ſhall be charged on the Goſpel it ſelf. And it is notoriouſly known how a falſe pretence of ſome Grants made in, and Appointments ſettled by the Goſpel, hath been made uſe of, to countenance ſome ſorts of men in the crafty Acquiſition, and violent Poſſeſſion of worldly Power Grandeur and Wealth, venting themſelves in Ambition, Cruelty, Luxury and Pride of Life. But the Iniquity and Folly of all theſe Abominations, curſed Artifices of the Father of Lies and Fountain of Malice, ſhall be (if God will) elſewhere diſcovered. At preſent I ſhall take it for granted, that in it ſelf it is a glorious Repreſentation of Divine Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Grace and Love; neither doth it produce any Effects but whereof God is the immediate Author, and will be the everlaſting Rewarder. Wherefore the Reaſons and Cauſes of Apoſtaſie from the part of the Goſpel under preſent Conſideration, that is, the *Myſteries* and *Truth* of its Doctrine, muſt be ſearched for in the *Minds* of them by

by whom it is forſaken, with the external Furtherances that doe accompany them.

It is not unneceſſary ſuch an Enquiry ſhould be engaged into. For things are in that Poſture and Condition in the Chriſtian World in this preſent Age, that if it ſhould be ſuppoſed, that the Lives of profeſſed Chriſtians do make a due Repreſentation of the Goſpel, that the Generality of men were led and influenced into that courſe of Life and Converſation which they openly purſue, by the Doctrines and Principles of it, it could ſcarce ſtand in competition with *Heatheniſh Philoſophy*, for Uſefulneſs unto the Glory of God, and the Good or Advantage of Mankind. It is not therefore the Goſpel, but it is Apoſtaſie from it which hath produced ſo many deplorable Effects in the World, and which by drenching Mankind in Wickedneſs make way for their Miſery and Ruine. And this in the Vindication of the Goſpel will be made in ſome meaſure to appear, in the diſcovery of the Cauſes and Reaſons of this Apoſtaſie. For let men pretend what they pleaſe, unleſs they have firſt forſaken the Goſpel in their Hearts and Minds, they would not, they could not forſake all Rules

Rules of *Holineſs* and *Morality* alſo in their Lives.

Again, the *Prevalency* of this Defection is ſo great, and the *Neglect* of Men (either intent on their private Occaſions Deſires and Intereſts, or captivated under the Power of it, unto the Approbation of the greateſt and moſt dangerous Evils) ſo viſible and ſhamefull, as that every ſincere Attempt to warn them of their Danger, to excite them unto their Duty, or direct them in its Performance, whereby the progreſs of this Product of the Councels of Hell may be obſtructed, and themſelves defeated, ought to have a candid Reception of all thoſe who have a due regard unto the Intereſt of Chriſt and the Goſpel in the World, or the everlaſting Concernments of their own Souls.

Theſe are the general Ends which are aimed at in the enſuing Diſcourſes. And if any one of greater Abilities for this work, ſhall be hereby provoked, or take occaſion from hence to make a more diligent Enquiry into the Cauſes and Reaſons of that Defection from the Glory and Power of Chriſtian Religion which prevails in the world, and ſhall thereon preſcribe more ſuitable and effectual Remedyes

dyes for the Healing of this *Epidemical* Diſtemper, I ſhall reſt abundantly ſatisfied in the Succeſs of this Attempt and Eſſay. And the Reaſons which preſent themſelves to my thoughts are theſe that follow.

That *rooted Enmity* which is in the Minds of men by Nature unto *Spiritual* things, abiding uncured under the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, is the Original and firſt Spring of this Apoſtaſie. So the Apoſtle tells us, that the *carnal Mind is Enmity againſt God*, *Rom.* 8. 7. that is, unto the Revelation of the Will and Mind of God in Chriſt, with the Obedience which he requireth thereunto; For of theſe things doth he there diſcourſe. The Nature of this Enmity, and how it operateth on the Minds of men, I have elſewhere declared at large, and ſhall not here again inſiſt upon them. It is ſufficient unto our preſent Purpoſe, that men on various Accounts may take upon them the Profeſſion of the *Truths* of the Goſpel, whileſt this *Enmity* unto Spiritual things abides uncured, yea Predominant in their Minds. So was it with them of whom the Apoſtle complains, that under their Profeſſion they manifeſted themſelves by their wicked Lives, *to be Enemies of the Croſs*

Croſs of Chriſt, *Phil.* 3. 18. As thoſe alſo who profeſſing *that they know God, do yet in Works deny him, being abominable and diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate*, *Tit.* 1. 16.

Thus upon the firſt Preaching of the Goſpel many were convinced of its Truth, and took upon them its Profeſſion, merely on the Account of the *Miracles* that were wrought in its Confirmation, whoſe Hearts and Minds were not in the leaſt reconciled unto the things contained in it; See *Joh.* 2. 23, 24. *Act.* 8. 13.

Some are ſo far prevailed with as to acknowledge its Truth, by the Efficacy of its Diſpenſation as an Ordinance of God for their Conviction and Inſtruction, and yet not part with their Enmity againſt it. Thus *John* was among the *Jews* as a *burning and ſhining Light*, and they rejoyced for a ſeaſon in his Miniſtry, *Joh.* 5. 35. inſomuch as the Body of the People were initiated into his Doctrine by the Token and Pledge of it in *Baptiſme*, *Matth.* 3. 5, 6. But though all of them confeſſed their ſins according to his Direction, very few forſook them according to their Duty.

When both theſe concurred, Preaching and Miracles in an eminent manner, as when

our Saviour Preached on his feeding *five thouſand with five Barley Loaves and two ſmall Fiſhes*, being prepared in their Minds by the Miracle they ſaw, they were ſo affected with his Doctrine about the *Bread of Life that came down from Heaven*, that they cryed out, *Lord give us evermore of this Bread*; *Joh.* 6. 34. But their Natural *Enmity* unto Spiritual things being yet uncured, upon his procedure to inſtruct them in Heavenly Myſteries they put in *Exceptions* to his Doctrine, *ver.* 41, 52, 60. and immediately forſook both Him and It; *ver.* 66. And our Saviour aſſigns the Reaſon of their Defection to have been their *Unbelief*, and that it *was not given unto them of the Father to come unto him*; ver. 64, 65. or the Enmity of their carnal Minds was yet unremoved. Hence what they eſteemed an hard and unintelligible ſaying, *ver.* 52, 60. his *true Diſciples* underſtood to be the words of *Eternal Life*, ver. 68.

In proceſs of time many are prepoſſeſſed with Notions of the Truth of the Goſpel in their Education, by the outward Means of Inſtruction that have been applyed unto them. But yet notwithſtanding this Advantage, they may ſtill abide under the Power of this depravation of their Minds.

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Evangelical Truths being by theſe or the like Means entertained in the Minds of men, which are alſo variouſly affected with them, they will move and act towards their proper End and Deſign. And hereof there are three parts.

(1.) To take off the *Soul* of Man from *Reſt and Satisfaction in it ſelf*, as unto preſent Peace in the Condition wherein it is, and Hope of future Bleſſedneſs by its own Endeavours. For neither of theſe are we capable of in our depraved Apoſtate ſtate. Wherefore the firſt Work of the Goſpel is to influence, guide, and direct the Minds of men to renounce themſelves as to theſe Ends, and to ſeek after Righteouſneſs, Life, Peace and Bleſſedneſs by Jeſus Chriſt.

(2) The *Renovation of our Minds*, *Wills* and *Affections* into the *Image or likeneſs of God*, is another part of its Deſign. And this it doth by preſenting *ſpiritual* things unto us, in that Light and Evidence, with that Power and Efficacy, as to transform us into their *likeneſs*, or to bring the ſubſtantial *Image* of them upon our whole Souls, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *Epheſ.* 4. 24. *Col.* 3. 10.

(3) It *engageth* the *whole Soul* in all its Powers and Faculties, through the whole courſe of its Activity, or in all it doth, to

live unto God in all holy Obedience, *Rom.* 12. 1.

But when this work, or any part of it is urged on the Conſciences and Practice of men, they like it not in any meaſure. The uncured *Enmity* whereof we ſpeak, riſeth up in Oppoſition unto them all. It begins to ſuppoſe that it hath admitted a troubleſome *In-mate*, that came in as it were to *ſojourn*, and will now be a *Judge*. Whileſt the Mind is exercis'd onely about the Notions of Truth in Speculation and Reaſonings, it is ſatisfied and pleaſed with them. Yea it will come unto a Complyance with its Guidance in *ſundry things* and Duties which it may perform, and yet abide upon its old Foundations of *ſelf-ſufficiency* and *ſatisfaction*, *Mark* 6. 20. But when in purſuit of the Ends before mentioned, the Goſpel preſſeth to take men off wholly from their Old Foundations and Principles of Nature, to work them unto an univerſal Change in Powers, Facultyes, Operations and Ends, to make them *New Creatures*, it proves irkſome unto that *Enmity* which is predominant in them, which therefore ſtirreth up all the Luſts of the Mind and the Fleſh, all the deceitful Policies of the *Old Man* and Powers of Sin, all

all carnal and unmortified Affections in oppoſition unto it. Hence Spiritual Truths are firſt *neglected*, then *deſpiſed*, and at laſt on eaſie terms *parted withall*.

For men by Conviction, and on Rational Grounds or Motives, whether *natural* or *ſpiritual* may receive that as Truth, and give an Aſſent unto it, which when it ſhould be reduced unto Practice, the Will and Affections will not comply withall. So it is ſaid of ſome, that ἐκ ἐδοκίμασαν τὸν θεὸν ἔχειν ἐν ἐπιγνώσει; *Rom.* 1. 28. *It liked them not*, It pleaſed them not, they approved not of it, to *hold*, retain, or keep *God in their knowledge*; or to continue in that Acknowledgement of him whereof they were convinced. The in-bred Notions which they had by the Light of Nature, with their Conſideration of the works of Creation and Providence, gave them Conceptions and Apprehenſions of the *Being* and *Power* of God, *ver.* 19, 20. Hereby they are ſaid to *know God*, as they did with reſpect to the things mentioned, that is, the Eſſential Properties of his Nature, *his eternal Power and Godhead*; *ver.* 21. This Knowledge, theſe Notions and Conceptions, did immediately direct them *to glorifie him as God* in holy Worſhip and Obedience, as

it is expreſſed in the ſame Verſe. But this, through the Depravation of their Minds and Affections *they liked not*, and therefore would not retain this Knowledge of him, but gave themſelves up unto all abominable Idolatries and brutiſh Luſts which were inconſiſtent therewithall, as the Apoſtle at large declares. Wherefore even as unto Divine things that are conveyed unto us by Natural Light, and ſuch as is unavoydable unto all Mankind, the Will, the Affections, and the practical Underſtanding, are more *vitiated* and *corrupted* than are the Preceptive and Directive Powers of the Mind. And hence it was that all the World who had nothing to conduct them but the Light of Nature, Apoſtatized from its Guidance, and lived in contrariety unto it. They were all *Rebels* againſt that Light which they had, and ſo will all Mankind be without the eſpecial Grace of God.

It is ſo alſo with reſpect unto Truths communicated by *ſupernatural Revelation*. It is given as the Character of thoſe who were to carry on the *great Apoſtaſie* from the Myſteries and Worſhip of the Goſpel, that they *received not the Love of the Truth that they might be ſaved*, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10.

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The *Truth* it ſelf as to the Profeſſion of it they did receive and own for a time. But ſuch an Approbation of it, ſuch a Love unto it as ſhould encline them unto Obedience or the improvement of it unto its proper Ends, that ſo they might be ſaved, they neither had nor endeavoured after. This made them prone on all Occaſions and Temptations to forgoe and relinquiſh the Profeſſion of it, to change it for the vileſt Errors and groſſeſt Superſtitions. For in ſuch a poſture of Mind, mens Corruptions will prevail againſt their Convictions. Firſt they will ſtifle the Truth as to its Operations, and then reject it as to its Profeſſion. Let other Notions be propoſed unto them, more ſuited unto the Vanity of their Minds or the Senſuality of their Affections, and they will not fail of a ready entertainment.

There are Inſtances among all ſorts of men, how when they have imbibed *Perſwaſions* and *Opinions*, even ſuch as are Falſe vain and fooliſh, and have them riveted in their Minds by powerfull Intereſts or inveterate Prejudices, neither the Evidence of Truth, nor the Fear of Danger can prevail with them for their Renunciation or Relinquiſhment. All falſe wayes in Chri-

ſtianity, and that of *Mahumetiſme*, give us Examples hereof. But we have two general Inſtances of it, that may well fill the Minds of men with Aſtoniſhment: The firſt is of the *Jews*, who for ſo many ſucceſſive Generations, under all manner of Difficulties and Calamities, continue obſtinate in the moſt irrational Unbelief, and Apoſtaſie from the Faith of *Abraham* their Forefather, and the Expectation of all their Anceſtors, that can enter into the Heart of any man to imagine. For many Generations thoſe who from among them have been ſo convinced of their Folly, as really and ſincerely to embrace the Goſpel, do ſcarce anſwer one unto *a Century* of years. The other is in the Church of *Rome*. It is known how that Communion aboundeth with men otherwiſe *wiſe* and *learned*, what Kings and Rulers of the Earth do adhere thereunto. And this they continue to doe, and will do ſo, notwithſtanding that the Errors, Impieties, Superſtitions and Idolatries of that Church are ſo many and ſo manifeſt. Other Inſtances there are ſufficiently pregnant to evince, that no Opinions in Religion can be ſo fooliſh or contemptible, but that ſome will be found pertinaciouſly to adhere unto them againſt

all

all Endeavours for their Relief, either in the way of God by Rational and Spiritual *Convictions*, or in the Way of the World by *Perſecution*.

It may be more may and will be found to be Obſtinate in *Error* upon Trials with Difficulties, Dangers, and Oppoſitions, than on the like Trials be conſtant in the Profeſſion of *the Truth*; I mean among them who together with its *external* Profeſſion have not received its *internal* Power and Efficacy, with the Love of it in their Hearts. For both ſorts receive their Notions and Apprehenſions of things in the ſame Way, and on the ſame Grounds of appearing Reaſons, though the Underſtanding be impoſed on and deceived in the one and not in the other. But Error once received under the Notion of Truth, takes firmer Root in the carnal Minds of Men, than Truth doth or can, whileſt their Minds are ſo carnal. And the Reaſon of it is, becauſe all *Error* is ſome way ſuited unto the Mind as thus depraved, and there is nothing in it that is Enmity thereunto. Neither in it ſelf nor any of its Effects doth the Mind diſlike it; for being fallen off from the firſt Truth and Goodneſs, it wanders and delights to wander in crooked or by-paths

of

of its own. For *God made Man upright, but they have ſought out many Inventions*, *Eccleſ.* 7. 29. Theſe it pleaſeth it ſelf withall, and is conformed unto. For there is ſomewhat in every Error to recommend it ſelf unto the Vanity or Curioſity, or Pride, or Superſtition of the carnal Mind. But it is otherwiſe with Evangelical Truths, which the Mind diſreliſheth, becauſe of its innate Enmity unto the things which they propoſe and exhibit. Hence it is eaſier for the moſt part to draw off a thouſand from the Profeſſion of it, who have no Experience of its *Power* and *Efficacy* in their Souls, than to turn one from an Erroneous way, eſpecially if he be confirmed in it by Intereſt and Prejudice. And ſo it is at preſent in the World. Every ſort or party of falſe Profeſſors, as *Papiſts* and others, do carry off multitudes of common Profeſſors from the Truth which they had owned, but ſeldom do we hear of any one recovered from their Snares. Nor need any Seducers deſire a greater Advantage, than to have admittance unto their work where Perſons live in an outward Profeſſion of the Truth, and inward Enmity unto it. They ſhall be filled with Proſelytes unto ſatiety.

This was the fundamental Cauſe of that Apoſtaſie

Apoſtaſie from the Doctrine and Truths of the Goſpel, which had prevailed in almoſt the whole viſible Church. Had the Generality of men received the Truth *in the Love* thereof, had they not had a ſecret Enmity in their Hearts and Minds againſt it, had not things vain curious and ſuperſtitious been ſuited unto the prevailing Principles of their Minds and Affections, they would not, they could not upon any Suggeſtions or Temptations, ſo eaſily, ſo univerſally have forſaken the Goſpel for the Traditions of Men, nor gone away from Chriſt to follow after Antichriſt, as we know them to have done. But when an *external Profeſſion* of the Truth became to be tranſmitted from one Generation to another, the *Spirit and Power* of it being wholly neglected, men did but wait for Opportunities gradually to part with it, and give it up for any thing elſe that was ſuggeſted unto them; many in the mean time ſetting their Wits on work to find out Inventions ſuited to their Luſts and corrupt Affections. That it was thus with them who were carried away with the great Apoſtaſie, that they did by all outward wayes and means in their Lives and Converſations manifeſt that ſo it was with them,

them, ſhall be afterwards declared. And had it not been ſo with them, the Event complained of had not enſued.

And herein lyes the preſent danger of the Perſons, Churches and Nations, which at this day make Profeſſion of the Goſpel. For if a preſſing Trial, or vigorous Temptation, if a Coincidence of various wayes and Means of Seduction do befall them who have *received the Truth* but not in the Love and Power of it, they will be hardly preſerved from a general Apoſtaſie. For when any Attempts ſhall be made from without upon them, they have Treachery from the Deceitfulneſs of their own Hearts at the ſame time working in them. For their *uncured Enmity* againſt the Truth doth but watch for an Opportunity to part with it, and reject it. Any thing that will but free them from the Efficacy of thoſe Convictions, or Power of the Traditions under which they are held captive unto the Profeſſion of the Truth, as it were whether they will no, ſhall be chearfully embraced and complyed withall. And the Danger hereof doth ſufficiently evidence it ſelf in that open diſlike of the Rule and Conduct of the Truth, which moſt men teſtifie in the whole Courſe of their Lives.

It

It is plain therefore, that unleſs this *Enmity* be conquered or caſt out of the Mind, unleſs the Mind be freed from its corrupt Agency and Effects, unleſs the Truth obtain its real Power and Efficacy upon the Soul, unleſs it be *ſo learned as it is in Jeſus*, whereby men put off concerning the former Converſation the *Old Man which is corrupt according unto deceitfull luſts*, and be *renewed in the ſpirit of* their *Minds*, putting on that *New Man which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*; unleſs they love and value it for the Effects of ſpiritual Peace Power and Liberty which it produceth in them, there will be found among them little Conſtancy or Perſeverance in their Profeſſion, when Temptations ſhall concurre with Opportunities for a Revolt. For who can give ſecurity that what hath formerly fallen out amongſt the Generality of Mankind, ſhall not in any place do ſo again, where the ſame Cauſes of it do again concurre.

Having diſcovered this *firſt Cauſe of Defection* from the Goſpel, we may eaſily diſcern what are the onely true effectual Wayes and Means of the Preſervation and Continuance of the true Religion in any place or among any People where it hath been

been profeſſed, eſpecially if Temptations unto a Revolt ſhould abound, and the Seaſon be made perillous by advantagious Opportunities: Love of the Truth and Experience of its Power in the Hearts of men will produce this Effect, and nothing elſe. All other Means where theſe have been wanting have failed in all places in the World, and will do ſo again when a time of Trial ſhall come. True Religion may be eſtabliſhed by Law, countenanced by Authority, have a Preſcription of a long Profeſſion, or be on other accounts ſo fixed on the Minds of men, as that multitudes ſhall promiſe the firmeſt Stability in the Profeſſion thereof. But there is no Security in things of this Nature; and we ſhall quickly ſee all the Hopes that are built upon them vaniſh into nothing. Convictions or Traditions unto whoſe Power a ſecret *Enmity* is retained, may make a bluſter and Noyſe for a ſeaſon, but every breath of Temptation will carry them away before it. Were it not ſo with the moſt of men, had it been poſſible that ſo many Nations in leſs than an *Age* ſhould fall into *Arianiſme*, after the Truth had been ſo long known and profeſſed among them; or that the Body of this Nation after

after a bleſſed Reformation ſhould again relapſe into *Popery*, as in the dayes of *Queen Mary*, when many who had profeſſed the Goſpel, caſt others into Flames who continued ſo to doe.

It is greatly complained of, that *Popery* doth encreaſe in this Nation, and ſome expreſs their Fears of its farther prevalency, and that perhaps not without Cauſe. And although there are ſeveral other wayes whereby men may and do *apoſtatize* from the Truth, yet all thoſe who take any other meaſure of things, beſides their own Secular Intereſts, with the corrupt Affections of their Minds, in Wrath, Envy, and Revenge, do look on this as far the moſt dangerous, as that which will be moſt compliant with the predominant Luſts of the preſent Age, and moſt comprehenſive to receive the Community of Men. Beſides, by what it hath done formerly, it ſufficiently inſtructs what it is like enough to doe again. Wherefore very many induſtriouſly attempt its prevention, as that which would prove (if it ſhould prevail) deplorably ruinous unto the Nation and their Poſterity therein. To this end ſome implore the Aid of Authority for the enacting of *ſevere Laws* for the prohibition of it.

This,

This, according to the Opinion of late Ages, ſome ſuppoſe the moſt effectual Means for the preſervation of the Truth. For if they can but deſtroy all that are otherwiſe-minded, the *reſt of Mankind* will have the face of Peace unto them who are advantaged thereby. Some write *Books* in the Confutation of the Errors of it, and that to very good Purpoſe. But in the mean time, (if there be any thing of Truth in Reports) the work is as effectually progreſſive as if no Oppoſition had been made unto it. And we may aſſure our ſelves, that theſe and ſuch like Means as theſe, if they are alone, will never keep *Popery* out of *England*, if it ſhould ever have an Advantage and Opportunity for a Return, nor prevent the Entrance of any other falſe way in Religion.

As for the Uſe and Severity of *Penal Laws*, I meddle not with it, as that which is to be referred to the Wiſdom of our Governours. But I muſt needs ſay, it ſeems not to be unto the Advantage of Truth, or at leaſt not unto the Reputation of them by whom it is profeſſed, that they ſhould no otherwiſe be able to preſerve its ſtation amongſt men. Neither can it be Honourable unto any Religion, that where it pretends

tends unto all the Advantages and Rights of Truth, and in the real poſſeſſion of all outward Emoluments and Supportments, yet that it cannot ſecure it ſelf or maintain its Profeſſion without outward Force and Violence, things ſo remote from the firſt Introduction and planting of Truth in the World. But theſe things are not of our preſent Conſideration. For the Confutation of the Errors, Superſtitions, and Idolatrous practices of the Church of *Rome* in Books of Controverſie, it is (no doubt) a work good, uſefull and neceſſary in its kind. But when all is done, theſe things reach but a *few*, nor will many divert from other Occaſions to the ſerious conſideration of them. Wherefore, ſome other way muſt be fixed on and ingaged in, to ſecure the Truth and Intereſt of Proteſtant Religion among us. And this is no other but the effectual Communication of the knowledge of it unto the Minds, and the Implantation of the Power of it on the Hearts of the People. This is that alone which will root out of them that *Enmity* unto Evangelical Myſteries and Spiritual things, which betrayes the Souls of men into Apoſtaſie.

Unleſs men know *what* they are to value

Religion for, and *what Benefit* they really receive by its Profeſſion, it is irrational to expect that they will be *conſtant* therein when a trial ſhall befall them. If once they come to ſay, It is *in vain thus to ſerve God*, or *what Profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances*, they will eaſily admit the Yoke of any Falſhood or Superſtition, that pretends to gratifie them with greater Advantages. And at one time or other it will be no otherwiſe with them with whom this *Enmity* is predominant.

But on the other ſide, when God by the Goſpel ſhines into the Hearts of men, *to give them the Knowledge of his Glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*; when they find their Conſciences ſet free thereby from the intolerable Yokes of Superſtition and Tradition; and that by the Word of Truth which they do profeſs, they are begotten anew unto the Hope of Eternal Life, their *inward Man* being renewed, and their *Lives* Reformed thereby; that their Expectation of a bleſſed Immortality is well founded on it, and ſafely reſolved into it; they will through the effectual Supplyes of the Spirit of Chriſt abide conſtant in the Profeſſion of it, whatever may befall them.

On

On theſe Terms, on theſe experienced Evidences of Truth and Goodneſs was the Goſpel firſt entertained among men, and the Reformation of Religion firſt introduced into this Nation. For although ſundry other things concurred unto its Reception and Eſtabliſhment, yet if the Minds of multitudes had not received an Experience of its Power and Efficacy unto the Ends mentioned, it would never have been of any Permanency among us. The mere outward Form of true Religion is not able to contend with that *Appearance* which Error and Superſtition will repreſent unto the Minds of Men, as knowing how much they ſtand in need thereof.

Theſe things I know are by ſome deſpiſed. They ſuppoſe they have ſurer Wayes, and better Expedients for the Preſervation of the Profeſſion of the Goſpel amongſt us, than its own Power and Efficacy. What thoſe Wayes are we need not conjecture, ſeeing themſelves declare them continually, but they ſhall not be here ſpoken unto. But it is to be feared that they may be filled with the Fruit of their own Imaginations when thoſe things ſhall fail them wherein they have placed their Confidence. Wherefore, if there be

a Neglect about theſe things in the Miniſtry, and others whoſe Duty it is to promote them, the Iſſue will be ſad, it may be beyond what is feared. For if the Body of the People be ſuffered to live without any Evidence of an Acquaintance with the Power of that Truth which they do profeſs, or any demonſtrative Fruits of it in a holy Converſation, we may cry out, *Popery, Popery*, as long as we pleaſe, when Temptations, Opportunities, and Intereſts do concurre, their Profeſſion will fall from them as dry leaves from a Tree when they are moved with the wind. The Apoſtle tells us, that thoſe *who went out from them were never of them*, for if they had *been of them* they would *have continued with them*, 1 *Joh.* 2. 19. They were *among* them by the Profeſſion of the Truth, or they could not have gone out *from* them. But they were *never of them* in the Participation of the *Power* of the Truth, and *Communion thereby with the Father and the Son*; for if they had, they would have *continued* with them, that is, ſteadfaſt in their Profeſſion.

This is that which ought to be fixed on the Minds of all perſons concerned, of all that are zealous for the Truth of the *Proteſtant*

teſtant Religion, or are obliged, what lyes in them, to provide for its preſervation. When things are come unto the appointed Seaſon, when they are iſſuing in that Period which they have a natural tendency unto, all other Expedients and Devices will be of none Effect. A diligent Communication unto the Body of the People through the Diſpenſation of the Word, or Preaching of it, the *Power* of the Truth they profeſs in all its bleſſed Effects, whereon they will have an Experience and Witneſs within themſelves, of the Reaſons why they ought to abide *conſtantly* in its Profeſſion, will alone ſecure the Continuance of the Goſpel in ſucceeding Generations. All other Means will be ineffectual unto that End; and ſo far as without this they are or may be effectual, it will be of no advantage unto the Souls of men.

That there is a *danger* at all times of a Defection among profeſſed Chriſtians from the Truth, hath been before evinced. That this Danger at preſent hath many eſpecial Circumſtances rendring it dangerous in a peculiar manner, is in like manner acknowledged by all ſuch as call theſe things into ſerious conſideration. And it will not (I preſume) be denyed, but that every man

according as he is called and warranted by especial Duty, is obliged to his utmost Endeavours for the Prevention of a Revolt from the Truth. The whole Enquiry is, What is the best Way, Means, or Expedient to be plyed unto this End. And this, I say, is onely by the diligent Ministerial Dispensation of the Word, with such an exemplary Zeal and Holiness in them by whom it is dispensed, and all other things requisite unto the Discharge of that work, as may reconcile the Hearts of the People unto *Evangelical* Truths, beget in them a *delight* in Obedience, and implant the *Power* of the Word in their whole Souls. Want hereof was that which lost the Gospel in former Ages, and will do so whereever it is, in this or those which are to come. And I shall not in my own thoughts blameably digress from my present Subject, if I confirm this Opinion with some few obvious Considerations. For,

1. It is the Way, *the onely Way* which God hath *ordained* and which he *blesseth* to this End and Purpose. None will pretend, as I suppose, that God hath appointed any other Way to bring men unto the Profession of the Truth, but by the Preaching and Dispensation of the Word alone. When they

they are wrought upon or convinced thereby, ſo as to give up themſelves unto the Profeſſion of it, it will be hard to find an Ordinance of God of another kind for their Preſervation therein. When the Apoſtle took his laſt Farewell of them who were converted by his Miniſtry at *Epheſus*, he *commended them to the Word of Gods Grace, which* (as he judged) *was able to build them up, and give them an Inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, Acts 20. 32.

A man would think it were a more difficult work to convert men from *Judaiſme*, or *Paganiſme*, any falſe Religion, unto the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, than to retain them in that Profeſſion when they are initiated thereinto. For in that firſt Work there are all ſorts of Prejudices and Difficulties to be conflicted withall; and not the leaſt advantage from any acknowledged Principles of Truth. But as to the Preſervation of men in the Profeſſion of the Truth which they have received and owned, the Work on many Accounts ſeems to be more expedite and eaſie. If therefore the Diſpenſation of the Word as it is Gods Ordinance unto that end, hath been a ſufficient and effectual Means for

the *former*, what Reaſon can be aſſigned that it ſhould not be ſo for the *latter* alſo, without farther Force or Violence?

It will be ſaid, that the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel were furniſhed with *extraordinary Gifts*, whereby their Miniſtry was rendred *effectual* unto the firſt Converſion of the Nations. But whereas now thoſe Gifts do ceaſe, the Efficacy of the Miniſtry doth ſo alſo, and therefore ſtands in need of ſuch *outward* Aſſiſtances as the former did not. I ſay, for my part, I wiſh it all the Aſſiſtance which thoſe unto whom it is committed can deſire, ſo that no Force be offered to the Conſciences or Perſons of other men. But why ſhall we not think that the *ordinary Gifts* of the Miniſtry are as ſufficient for the *ordinary Work* of it, as the *extraordinary* were for that which was *extraordinary*? To ſpeak the truth, the Difference lyeth in *Perſons* in the diſcharge of their Duty, and not in the things, Gifts or Duties themſelves. Were all thoſe who are Called, or profeſs themſelves to be Called unto the Preſervation of the Truth of the Goſpel in the Work of the Miniſtry, as conſcientiouſly diligent in the diſcharge of their Duty, as well fitted according to the Rules of the Goſpel with thoſe ordinary

ſpiritual

ſpiritual Gifts which are neceſſary unto their Work and Calling; did as fully repreſent the Deſign and Nature of their Meſſage unto men in an holy Converſation, as thoſe firſt appointed unto the Converſion of the Nations were, and did, according to their larger Meaſures of Grace and Gifts; the Work would have a proportionate Succeſs in their hands unto what it had in the Beginning. But whileſt thoſe unto whom this Charge is committed, do neglect the Uſe of this Means which is the Ordinance of God unto this purpoſe, that the Truths of the Goſpel be preſerved amongſt men, whileſt either they judge that the principal End of their Office is to capacitate them for Secular Advantages, and to give them outward Reſt therein, with the Enjoyment of thoſe things which unto the moſt in this World ſeem deſireable, and therewithall think meet to betake themſelves unto other Expedients for the Preſervation of the Truth, which God hath not appointed nor ſanctified to that End, it is no wonder if Faith and Truth fail from amongſt men.

The Apoſtle *Paul* foreſaw that a Time would come, wherein ſome men would *not endure endure ſound Doctrine, but after*

their

their own hearts lusts would *heap up unto themselves Teachers, having itching Ears,* who should *turn them away from the Truth, and turn them unto Fables*; 2 *Tim.* 4. 3, 4. And we may see what Course he prescribeth for the Prevention of this Evil, that it might not proceed unto a *general Apostasie.* It must also be observed, that the Advice he gives in this Case, though Originally directed unto one individual Person who was immediately concerned, yet it lyes in Charge on all that are or shall be called unto the Rule of, or Ministry in the Church. This Course he proposeth *vers.* 1, 2, 5. of that Chapter. *I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead, at his Appearing and his Kingdom, Preach the Word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and Doctrine, watch in all things, endure Afflictions, do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy Ministry.* This is that Course and Way which he prescribeth for the Preservation of the Truth against the Corruptions of mens Minds and the Craft of Seducers. And the Charge of this Duty he giveth with so great a Solemnity, and urgeth with so many Motives emphatically expressed, as manifest

manifeſt of how great moment he conceived it to be.

Perhaps this way of the preſervation of the Truth, and the Salvation of the Souls of Men by continual *labouring in the Word and Doctrine*, with an undergoing of all thoſe Difficulties which attend it, is not eſteemed ſo adviſeable as formerly. For what Good would mens Lives or Preferments doe unto them, if they ſhould be obliged thus to labour in this *ſweaty kind of Preaching?* But if it be ſo, they muſt at one time or another be contented to part with the Truth and all the Advantages they have by the Profeſſion of it. For let men turn themſelves which way they pleaſe, let them traverſe their Methods, and multiply their Councels to ſecure Religion according to their Apprehenſion, however they may hereby chain their Idols as the Heathens did their Gods of Old, to prevent their departure from them, and fix a Profeſſion of Lyes, the Truth of the Goſpel as unto any uſefull End of it will be no otherwiſe preſerved in a Nation, Church or People, but by this Means of Gods appointment.

2. This is ſuch a Way and Expedient for the Preſervation of the Truth and the Pro-

Profeſſion of the Goſpel, as none can have the Impudence to complain of, or except againſt. There is in all places, among all ſorts of Perſons, a pretence of Zeal for the retaining of what they conceive to be the Truth, or Right in Religion. But the Wayes which for the moſt part they have choſen unto that purpoſe, have been full of Scandal unto *Chriſtian Religion*: So far from being Rational Means of preſerving men in it, as that they are effectual to deterre them from it. Such is that *outward Force* which hath been now tryed in this Nation, as elſewhere by all ſorts of Perſons; and wiſe men may eaſily obſerve what it is arrived unto. In the mean time it is openly evident, that let the End aimed at be never ſo Good, the Means uſed for the attaining of it are accompanyed with much Evil. What peace or Satisfaction they have in themſelves who are the *Proſecutors* of this way, I know not. It is above my underſtanding to apprehend that the Minds of any Chriſtians can be thoroughly at eaſe, rejoycing in God through Jeſus Chriſt, whileſt they cauſe others to be terrified, purſued, ruined and deſtroyed, meerly for that which is their Faith and Hope in Chriſt Jeſus. But I know not the Principles of the

the Minds of other men, the Make or Conſtitution of their Conſciences, nor the Rules of their walking before God, much leſs their prevailing Prejudices and Intereſts that influence them beyond all evidence of Reaſon to the contrary; and therefore they may have a ſatisfactory peace in this way, though I underſtand not how. On the other ſide, thoſe who are practiſed upon, and forced to ſuffer in this Courſe of proceeding, are filled with *Alienation* from them and their profeſſion by whom they ſuffer. Hence it is known what mutual Animoſities, Hatreds, Contentions, ſevere Reflections and dreadfull Scandals this way is attended withall. We ſee at this day what Clamours and Conteſts are raiſed about it, what pleas are managed againſt ſuch procedures, how uncouth it is unto Humane Nature, to ſuffer all Extremities for that which men are fully perſwaded they deſerve well in of Mankind; nor can any man give Aſſurance, but that at one time or other the Wheat ſhall be plucked up inſtead of Tares.

But as to the way now propoſed, of preſerving the Truth by the diligent, effectual Diſpenſation of the Word of the Goſpel unto the generality of the People, who

who can pretend a provocation by it, or take offence at it? *No mortal man* will be prejudiced by it in any thing that he dares own a Concernment in. The *Devil* indeed will be enraged at it, not onely as that which is deſigned unto the ruine of his Intereſt and Kingdom in the iſſue, but as that wherein he hath no ſhare, nor can interpoſe his Endeavours. For he is a Spirit as *reſtleſs* and *active* as he is *malitious*, and loves not to be excluded out of any Buſineſs that is on foot in the world. Wherefore although he equally hates the Truth in the Management of all men, yet in the way of *preſerving* of it before mentioned, he can and doth ſo apparently immix himſelf and his effectual workings, that he is very well ſatisfied with it; For what he may poſſibly loſe on the one hand in point of *Truth*, he gains ten times more on the other in the loſs of *Love*, *Peace*, *Holineſs*, with all the Fruits of Goodneſs, Meekneſs and Benignity, which ought to be among men. And let him have but his hand effectually in the promotion of this *loſs*, and have the contrary Fruits to feed upon, he is little concerned with the Profeſſion of Truth in this or that Way of Worſhip amongſt men. Be it therefore that he is

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or will be enraged at this way of *preſerving* the Truth, we know that the Kingdom of Chriſt will be no otherwiſe maintained in the world but by a Conqueſt of his Rage. And for thoſe who mannage the ſame deſign with him, their Wrath and Envy which they dare not manifeſt, will but torment and conſume themſelves.

3. Setting aſide ſome few Inſtances of *Violence* and *Blood* conſuming the Perſons of men, as among the *Waldenſes*, *Bohemians*, and ſome others, which yet were never totally prevalent; and Revolutions of Government attended with the like Cruelties as in the dayes of *Queen Mary* in *England*, which was but of ſhort continuance; no Inſtance can be given of the Defection of any Church or Nation from the Truth, but where there was a neglect of implanting the *power* of the Goſpel on the Minds and Hearts of men by thoſe unto whom that Charge is committed. This ſinfull Neglect was that which conſtantly opened the Door unto all Apoſtaſie. Wherefore, on this Foundation the weight of all uſefull Profeſſion of the Goſpel among us doth depend. And if God will be pleaſed to put it into the Hearts of all them who are concerned in this Duty, to labour effectually

fectually therein, and to give unto the People an Example of the *power* of the Goſpel, in their own holy humble uſefull fruitfull Converſation among them, and ſhall be pleaſed moreover to furniſh them with the *Gifts of his Spirit*, enabling them unto a ſucceſſefull diſcharge of their Duty, Evangelical Truth would certainly receive an unconquerable Eſtabliſhment among us. And it may be it is not ſuited unto the Exigence of this Seaſon, that any of thoſe who are called and enabled unto this work, being willing to engage their utmoſt in defence of the Truth, eſpecially in this way of its *preſervation*, by leavening the Minds of men with a ſence of its *power* and *worth*, ſhould be prohibited the diſcharge of their Duty. But the Purpoſes of God in all things muſt ſtand, and himſelf be humbly adored, where his *Judgements are unſearchable*, and his *Wayes paſt finding out*.

Again, This innate and yet uncured *Enmity* unto things *ſpiritual* and *heavenly* becomes a Cauſe and Means of *Apoſtaſie* from the Truths of the Goſpel, by filling the Hearts of men with a *Love of Sin*, and their Lives with the Fruits of it in *wicked Works*. For men are *alienated, and enemies in their minds* in *or* by *wicked works*; *Col.* 1. 21.

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The Enmity which is in their Minds doth operate and manifeſt it ſelf in wicked works. And the Alienation wherewith this Enmity is accompanyed, is from *the Life of God*; *Eph.* 4. 18. *Having the Underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God*; that is, the ſpiritual heavenly Life of Faith and Holineſs, which God requireth, and whereof he is the End and Object. Of this Life the Truths of the Goſpel are the Spring, Rule, and Meaſure; See *Act.* 5. 20. *Epheſ.* 4. 24. Wherefore, when men are *alienated from the Life of God*, and through the Love of Sin are given up unto *wicked works*, they cannot but ſecretly diſlike and *hate* that Truth, that Spiritual and Heavenly Doctrine which is the *Spring* and *Rule* of Holineſs, and whereby both the *Love of Sin* and the Fruits of it in *wicked Works*, are everlaſtingly condemned. Let then men pretend and profeſs what they pleaſe, whileſt this *Enmity* is in them as a predominant Principle of Sin and wicked Converſation, they are *practically* and *really* Enemies unto the Goſpel it ſelf. And where any perſons are ſo, it is eaſily imaginable, how ready and prone they will be to part with it on any Occaſion. For none will retain that in their Minds which

is *uſeleſs* to them, and *troubleſome* unto their principal Inclinations, any longer than they have a fair Opportunity to part with it. That this Frame of Mind is an effectual Obſtruction unto the *due receiving* of the Goſpel, our Saviour expreſſely declares, *Joh.* 3. 19, 20. *This is the Condemnation, that light is come into the World, and men loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh unto the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.* Wherever the *power* of Sin abideth, and men are engaged in the *practice* of it, ſo as that their *deeds are evil*, they will not receive the Light of the Goſpel; that is, in its own Nature and Power, and for its proper Ends. And when they are by Conviction or any other Means wrought unto a complyance with it, yet they do it but *partially* and *hypocritically*, nor can do it otherwiſe whileſt their deeds are Evil. So was it with them who are ſaid to *believe in Chriſt*, being ſome way convinced of the Truth of his Doctrine, yet would they not *confeſs him*, becauſe *they loved the praiſe of men more than the praiſe of God*; *Joh.* 12. 42, 43. By the reigning Power of this one ſin of ambitious Hypocriſie, moſt of them

them were kept off from any aſſent unto the Goſpel, as our Saviour ſpeaks unto them, *How can you believe which receive honour one of another, and ſeek not the honour which cometh from God only*; *Joh.* 5. 44. With the reſidue who were not able wholly to withſtand their Convictions, it prevailed ſo far as that they ſhould not receive it *ſincerely* but *partially* and hypocritically. Now that which ſo effectually keeps the moſt from giving any *Admiſſion* at all unto the Goſpel, and which ſuffers none to receive it in a *due Manner*, will eaſily prevail where it abides in its *power* unto a total Relinquiſhment of it when Occaſion is offered.

Seeing therefore that all thoſe whoſe *deeds are evil*, who through the Enmity that is in their Minds do give up themſelves in their Lives unto *wicked Works*, are really alienated from the Truths of the Goſpel, they are and will be ready at all times for a Defection from them. For being kept under the Dominion of Sin, they have no real Benefit by them, but rather find them inconſiſtent with their principal Intereſts and chiefeſt Joys.

Hence is that Deſcription which the Apoſtle giveth of thoſe who were Evan-

gelically converted unto God; *Rom.* 6. 17, 18. *God be thanked that you were the ſervants of Sin, but you have obeyed from the Heart that form of Doctrine which was delivered unto you; being then made free from Sin, ye became the ſervants of Righteouſneſs.* There is no Obedience from the Heart unto the Goſpel, no poſſibility of being caſt into the Mould of the Doctrine delivered in it, unleſs we be made free from the ſervice of Sin.

We may therefore without ſcruple fix this as one principal Means and Cauſe of that Apoſtaſie from the Truth of the Goſpel which hath been in the World, and which is yet deplorably progreſſive. Men who *love Sin*, and *live in Sin*, whoſe Works are wicked, and whoſe Deeds are evil, are all of them in their Hearts alienated from the ſpiritual holy Doctrines of the Goſpel, and will undoubtedly on any Occaſion of Temptation or Trial, fall away from the Profeſſion of them.

What reaſon have we to hope or judge, that Drunkards, Swearers, unclean Perſons, Covetous, Proud, Ambitious, Boaſters, vain Senſualiſts, and the like Enemies of the Croſs of Chriſt, ſhould adhere unto the Truth with any Conſtancy if a Trial ſhould befall

befall them. *Look diligently*, (ſaith the Apoſtle) *leſt there be any Fornicator or Profane perſon as Eſau, who for one morſel of meat ſold his Birth-right*; *Heb.* 12. 16. *Eſau's* Birth-right was his Right unto and Intereſt in the Promiſe of the Goſpel made unto *Abraham*. This he being a prophane Perſon, when he was preſſed with a little hunger, parted withall, for one *morſel of Meat*. And if others, ſaith the Apoſtle, are like him, prophane perſons, Fornicators, or ſuch as live in any Courſe of Sin, if a Temptation befall them, and their Luſts call to be ſatisfied, they will for *morſels of Bread*, for the ſmalleſt earthly Advantages, part with their Intereſt in and Profeſſion of the Goſpel. So he tells us of them who having *put away a good Conſcience* did make *ſhipwrack of the Faith*; 1 *Tim.* 1. 19. After men have debauched their Conſciences by living in Sin, they may for a while ſpeed on their Voyage with full Sails of Profeſſion; but if a Storm comes, if a Trial befall them, if they meet with a Rock or Shelve in their way, they quickly *make Shipwrack of the Faith*, and loſe *that* whatever elſe they labour to preſerve.

What ſhould ſecure ſuch Perſons unto any Conſtancy in Profeſſion? for whileſt

they are in this Condition, it is altogether indifferent unto them, as to their preſent or future Advantage, what Religion they are of; or whether they are of any at all or no. It is true, one way of Religion may more harden them in Sin, lay more prejudices againſt and hindrances of their Converſion, than another. But no Religion can do them good, or yield them the leaſt eternal Advantage whileſt they abide in that Condition. It will be all one at the laſt day what Religion wicked and ungodly Sinners have been of; unleſs it be that the Profeſſion of the Truth will prove an Aggravation of their Sins, *Rom.* 2. 11, 12.

Beſides, when a Temptation unto the Relinquiſhment of the Truth doth befall them, it hath nothing but a few Traditional prejudices to contend withall. When they are taken off from them, and begin to ſearch themſelves for Reaſons why they ſhould adhere unto the Truth which they have outwardly profeſſed, they quickly find in their own hearts a predominant diſlike and hatred of that Light and Truth which they are ſollicited to part withall. For every man, as our Saviour teſtifieth, *hateth the Light*, whoſe deeds are evil.

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This is that which abroad in the world hath loſt the Goſpel ſo many *Princes*, *Nobles*, and great Men, who for a while made Profeſſion of it. This is that which is of ſuch diſmal abode at this day, as to the danger of a general Apoſtaſie. All ſorts of Perſons do give up themſelves unto the ſervice of Sin. The Complaint of the Prophet is not unſuited to our Occaſion, *Iſa.* 1, 4, 5, 6. Many are openly flagitious, beyond Preſident or Example among the Heathen: Worldlineſs, Pride, Ambition, Vanity, in all its variety of Occaſions and Objects with Senſuality of Life, have even over-run the world. And that which is of the moſt dreadfull conſideration, is that the ſins of many are accompanyed with the higheſt Aggravation of all Provocations; namely, that they *proclaim* them like *Sodom*, and hide them not, but glory in their *ſhame*. In all theſe things men do really though not in words proclaim that they are weary of the Goſpel, and are ready to leave it, ſome for any pretence of Religion, ſome for none at all.

And this is the moſt dangerous Poſture that any Place, Church, or People can be found in. For whereas men are of themſelves ready and prone unto a *ſpiritual* Re-

volt and Defection; when this ariſeth from and is promoted by the Love of Sin, and a Life therein, God is ready alſo penally to give them up unto ſuch Deluſions, as ſhall turn them off from the Goſpel. So the Apoſtle expreſſeth it; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10, 11, 12. *They received not the love of the Truth that they might be ſaved. And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſions that they ſhould believe a lye; that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* Where men under the Profeſſion of the Truth will continue profligate in Sin, and taking pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs, God will not alwayes ſuffer the Goſpel to be proſtituted to give them Countenance in their wickedneſs, but will Judicially give them up unto ſuch Deluſions, as ſhall flood them away into an open Apoſtaſie from it.

This was the great Cauſe of that general and almoſt *Catholick* Apoſtaſie that was in the World before the Reformation. The Body of the Chriſtian People, by ſuch Means and on ſuch Occaſions as ſhall be afterwards declared, were grown worldly, ſenſual, wicked and Obſtinate in ſin. The Complaints hereof are left on Record in the Writings of many in thoſe dayes. And

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in vain it was for any to attempt to reduce them unto a Conformity unto the Goſpel, eſpecially conſidering that the moſt of their Guides were no leſs Infected than themſelves. *Chryſoſtome* was almoſt the only perſon, at leaſt he was the moſt eminent who ſet himſelf in his Miniſtry to ſtemme (if it were poſſible) the riſing Tide of Impiety and Wickedneſs among all ſorts of perſons. But inſtead of any ſucceſs, his holy Endeavours ended in his own Baniſhment and Death. All Degrees and Orders of men undertook the Patronage of publick ſinning, againſt him, and to his ruine. Wherefore, there remained but two wayes of dealing with the Generality of men in ſuch a condition. The one was, according to the advice of the Apoſtle, to *turn away or withdraw from them*; 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. ſo leaving them out of the Communion of the Church. The other was, to accommodate Religion unto their Temper and Luſts, whereby a Face and Appearance of Chriſtianity might be preſerved among them. And the generality of their Leaders preferring their Intereſt before their Duty, the *latter* way was choſen and gradually promoted.

Hence were Opinions and Practices invented, advanced, and taken into Religion, that

that might accommodate men in their Luſts, or give countenance and pretended relief unto them who were reſolved to live in their ſins. Such were *Auricular Confeſſion*, *Penances*, *Abſolutions*, *Commutations of all ſorts*, *Miſſatical Sacrifices* for the Living and the Dead, the Churches Treaſury of *Merit*, and Power of *Pardon*, Suffrage and Help of *Saints*, eſpecially *Purgatory* with all its Appendages.

Hereby was the *Apoſtaſie* compleated; for men being grown carnal and *wicked*, there appeared no way to keep them up unto the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, but by the corrupting the whole *Doctrine* and *Worſhip* of it, that their Luſts might be ſome way accommodated. To this End, *external* things were ſubſtituted in the room of things *internal*, having the ſame Names given unto them; *Eccleſiaſtical* things in the room of things *Spiritual*; outward Offices, Orders, and multiplyed Sacraments with their Efficacy by vertue of the work wrought, in the place of real Converſion unto God, Purity of Heart, with ſtrict univerſal Holineſs; *Diſciplines* and corporeal Severities, in the room of Evangelical Repentance and Mortification. Nor could the Luſts of men have poſſibly an higher

Accommo-

Accommodation whileſt any pretence of Religion was neceſſary to be preſerved. So formerly did Wickedneſs of Life lead the way into Apoſtaſie from the Truth. And the whole of the *Papal* Apoſtaſie may be reduced unto theſe two heads. Firſt an Accommodation of the *Doctrine* and *Worſhip* of the Goſpel unto the *carnal Minds* and *Luſts* of men, with the *ſtate* of their Conſciences that enſued thereon. And Secondly, the Accommodation of the *Luſts*, *Ignorance* and *Superſtition* of men, unto the *Intereſts* and *worldly Advantage* of the *Pope* and his Clergy.

And herein lyeth the Danger of this Age. The great Deſign of the generality of men is to *live in Sin* with as little Trouble at *preſent*, and as little Fear of what is *future* as they can arrive unto. And there are but two Wayes whereby ſuch a Poſture of Mind may be attempted.

The one is by Obliterating all *Notions* of *Good* and *Evil*, all *Senſe* of future Rewards and Puniſhments, or of Gods Government of the World. This ſome in all Ages have endeavoured. For *the Fool hath ſaid in his heart there is no God*: And thereon are *they corrupt, and doe abominable works*; *Pſal.* 14. 1. And no Age could ever

ever give more Inſtances of this affected *Atheiſme* than that wherein we live. Neither do any deceive themſelves into it, but meerly with this Deſign, to Live in Sin without Controll from themſelves, which is the laſt Reſtraint they can acquit themſelves of. And ſome of them do pleaſe themſelves with the Attainment of them in the *Pſalmiſt*: *The Wicked through the Pride of his Countenance will not ſeek after God*; *God is not in all his thoughts*; *Pſal.* 10. 4. But God hath in-laid the Minds of men, antecedently unto all Actings of their Wills and Affections, with ſuch a tenacious and unanſwerable *Witneſs* to the contrary, that it is very difficult for any to bring themſelves unto any tolerable Satisfaction this way. For *that which may be known of God is manifeſt in themſelves* whether they will or no; *Rom.* 1. 19. Neither can they free themſelves from prevailing Apprehenſions, that *it is the judgement of God, that they who commit Sin are worthy of Death*, verſ. 32. Wherefore we have not many Inſtances of men who pretend a ſenceleſneſs of theſe things out of Principle, or that they find no diſquietment on the account of Sin. And by the moſt of them this is but pretended: Their *outward Boaſting* is but a ſorry Plaiſter

Plaiſter for their *inward Fears* and *Vexations*. Nor will the pretended Security of ſuch impious Perſons endure the Shock of the leaſt of thoſe Surprizals, Calamities and Dangers which Humane Nature is obnoxious unto in this Life, much leſs of Death it ſelf. The End therefore mentioned, be it never ſo earneſtly deſired, is not this way to be attained.

Another Way therefore muſt be found out unto the ſame End, and this muſt be by *a Religion*. Nothing but Religion can convert men from Sin, and nothing but Religion can ſecure them therein. To this purpoſe is that of our Apoſtle; *In the laſt dayes perillous times ſhall come; for men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, diſobedient unto Parents, unthankfull, unholy, without natural Affection, Truce-breakers, falſe Accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, Traytors, heady, high-minded, lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God, having a Form of Godlineſs, but denying the Power thereof.* 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Had they the *Power* of Religion in them, they could not give themſelves up unto the purſuit of ſuch brutiſh Luſts; and had they not ſome Form or other of it, they could not be ſecure in their Practice. For,

Sin

Sin and *Conſcience* are ſtubborn in their Conflict whileſt immediately oppoſed; *Conſcience* pleading that there ſhould be no Sin; and *Sin* contending that there may be no Conſcience: But as Nature is corrupted they will both comply with an Accommodation. Wherefore a device to *ſatisfie* Sin, and to *deceive* Conſcience, will not fail of a ready Entertainment. And this is the Deſign in part or in whole of every falſe Way in Religion that men Apoſtatize into from the *purity* and *ſimplicity* of the Goſpel. See 2 *Pet.* 2. 18, 19. One Way or other is propoſed to take men off from the Neceſſity of Regeneration, and the Renovation of their Nature into the *Image* of God in the firſt place. For this is that *Lyon* in the way, which deterrs all ſorts of *ſluggards* from attempting any thing ſeriouſly in Religion. And whereas our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath placed the Neceſſity of it on the firſt entrance into the Kingdom of God; there is no falſe Way of Religion, but its firſt Deſign is to deſtroy its *Nature*, or take away its *Neceſſity*. Hence ſome would have it to be onely *Baptiſme* with the Grace it conferrs by the work wrought. Some ſubſtitute *a Moral Reformation* of Life in the room of it, which

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(as they ſuppoſe) is ſufficiently ſevere. And the *Light within* makes all thoughts of it uſeleſs. For if this point be not well ſecured, all enſuing Attempts to accommodate men with a Religion will be in vain. It will ſtill be returning on them, that unleſs *they are born again*, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. Internal Sanctification of the whole Perſon, the Mortification of all the Motions of Sin that are in the Fleſh, with that Univerſal Obedience which is required unto the Life of God, muſt alſo be provided for or againſt, and yet Conſcience be ſatisfied therewithall. Wherefore, if you can obtain, that Perſons who live in Sin, and are reſolved ſo to do, not troubling themſelves about theſe things, ſhall ſuppoſe that they may be ſecured eternally in ſuch a Way of Religion as you propoſe unto them; that what is wanting in themſelves ſhall be done for them by *Abſolutions* and *Maſſes*, and various Supplyes out of the *Churches Treaſury*, with the great Reſerve of *Purgatory* when things come to the worſt; there is no great fear, (eſpecially if ſome other Circumſtances fall in alſo to promote the Deſign,) but that you will find them very Ductile and pliable unto your deſires. Add hereunto, that the

Wayes

Wayes whereby any may be interested in these Efficacious Means of Eternal Salvation, namely, by *Confession*, *Penances* and *Alms*, are possible, yea easie to Persons who never intend to leave their Sins. Of this sort are the most of those visibly who every day fall off to the *Roman Church*. And it were to be desired, that the Wickedness of men did not give Grounds of fearing Additions to their Number. For if there be no Assurance of the *Constancy* of men in the Profession of the Truth, unless their Souls and Lives are transformed into the *Image* of it, (as there is not,) certainly these Wayes wherein men are furiously ingaged in the pursuit of their Lusts, must needs be *perillous*, and may without the especial Help of Divine Grace bring forth a *fatal Defection*.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Darkneſs and Ignorance, another Cauſe of Apoſtaſie.

THE ſecond Spring or Cauſe of Defection from the Goſpel in any kind, is that Spiritual *Darkneſs* and *Ignorance* which abides in the Minds of Men under the Profeſſion of the Truth.

The Goſpel may fall under a double Conſideration: Firſt, Of the *Things themſelves* that are contained, revealed, and propoſed therein. Theſe are the material Objects of our Faith. Secondly, With reſpect unto the *Doctrinal way* of their *Declaration*. With reſpect unto the *firſt* there is a Spiritual *Darkneſs* on the Minds of all men by Nature, ſo as that they cannot diſcern them in their own *native* Form and Beauty. With reſpect unto the *latter* men are ſaid to be *ignorant*, namely, when they do not in a due manner underſtand and comprehend the *Doctrines* of the Goſpel; and ſo

periſh for want of Knowledge. Theſe things being of a diſtinct Conſideration, and of different Influence into this pernicious Event, the firſt ſhall be firſt ſpoken unto.

1. That there is ſuch a *ſpiritual Darkneſs* on the Minds of men by Nature, and wherein their Depravation by Sin doth principally conſiſt, is fully teſtified in the Scripture, as I have at large elſewhere evinced. Hence all men grant, ſo far as I know, that there is need of *ſpiritual Illumination*, to enable us to diſcern Spiritual things in a due Manner, though all are not agreed in the Nature and Cauſes of that Illumination. But to deny the thing it ſelf, is to deny the Goſpel, and to make the Promiſes of God of none effect. Now where *Illumination* is needfull, there Darkneſs is to be removed. For, the end of the bringing in of Light is to diſpell Darkneſs. Wherefore ſuch a Depravation of the Minds of men in ſpiritual Darkneſs muſt be acknowledged, or the Gift and Grace of God in *Illumination* muſt be rejected. And they by whom it is done, doe by their own Blindneſs give new Evidence unto the Truth which they doe oppoſe; there being no more certain Demonſtration of the Power

Power of Darkneſs in any, than for them to affirm that they ſtand in no need of Light to be communicated unto them by the effectual Operations of the Spirit of God. As to the Nature of this Illumination, I ſhall not here diſpute, but take it at preſent for granted, that it is *an Act of his Power who of old commanded Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs, ſhining into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 4. 6.

2. There is a *Glory and Beauty* in thoſe *ſpiritual things* which are the *Subjects* of the Truths of the Goſpel. There is in them the *wiſdom* of God, the *Wiſdom of God in a Myſtery*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 6, 7. yea, *the manifold Wiſdom of God*, *Epheſ.* 3. 10. The *Glory of the Lord*; which is repreſented unto Believers in *the Glaſs* of the Goſpel, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. or *the Glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*, *Chap.* 4. 6. Things expreſſely beyond diſcovery by the uſe of any means meerly Natural whatever, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9, 10. Even the *Philoſophers* of old contended that there was a *Beauty* in all Truth, which would engage the Minds and Affections of men unto it, were they able to diſcern it. And if they ſaw and granted this in things Natural and Moral, which are Earthly and

expoſed unto the common Reaſon of Mankind, how much more muſt it be granted of the Truth of things Heavenly, Spiritual and Divine. See *Joh.* 3. 12. In brief, whatever there is of divine Glory or Excellency in the Divine Nature it ſelf, in any or all of its holy Properties, in the great and moſt glorious Effect of them in the Perſon and Grace of Chriſt, in the Renovation of our Nature unto the *Image* of God, in the divine Life of Faith and Obedience, it is propoſed unto us in the Truths of the Goſpel.

3. Whatever *Doctrinal Propoſition* may be made of theſe things unto the minds of Men, yet the things themſelves cannot be comprehended nor Spiritually diſcerned without the *Illumination* of the Holy Ghoſt before mentioned. Hence it follows, that men may be inſtructed in the Doctrines of Truth, yet continuing under the Power of Natural Darkneſs, not diſcern the things themſelves in their own ſpiritual Nature and Glory, nor have any Experience of their Power and Efficacy. This all the Prayers of holy men in the Scripture for ſpiritual Light and Inſtruction, all the Promiſes of God ſavingly to enlighten the Minds of men, and the Deſcriptions given

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of that work of his Grace whereby he doth effect it, do undenyably evince. One Conſideration will be ſufficient unto our purpoſe. Whoever hath a *ſpiritual* View and Knowledge of theſe things, his Mind will be and is certainly *changed and transformed* into the Image of them. So the Apoſtle tells us expreſſely; 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *We all with open face beholding as in a Glaſs the Glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame Image.* They are caſt into the ſame mould with the Doctrine whereunto they are given up, *Rom.* 6. 17. The Mind is united unto the things ſo diſcerned, and the Image of them is ſo brought forth therein, as that there is an exact Conformity between them. But we ſee by open and palpable Experience, that notwithſtanding the Knowledge which many have of *ſpiritual* things, their Minds continue Carnal and Fleſhly, filled with corrupt and depraved Affections and are no way changed into the Image or Likeneſſe of the things themſelves. There needs no farther Demonſtration that men have never had a *ſpiritual* view of, or inſight into the Glory of Goſpel Truths, be their Doctrinal Knowledge of them what it will, than this, that their Minds are not renewed thereby,

nor transformed into the Likeneſſe of them.

4. Where it is thus with men, they have no *ſtable Grounds* whereon to abide in the Profeſſion of the Truth againſt *Temptation*, *Oppoſition*, or *Seduction*. For their *ſtedfaſtneſs* muſt be an Effect of ſuch an Aſſurance in their Minds of the Truth of the things which they do believe, as will be prevalent againſt all that Force and Artifice wherewith they may be aſſaulted, and ſuch as will not ſuffer their own Minds to be indifferent, careleſs or negligent about them. But whence ſhould this ariſe? Aſſurance from outward *natural* Senſe in *ſpiritual* things we are not capable of; nor are they evidenced unto our Minds by Rational Demonſtration. All the full Perſwaſion or Aſſurance we can have of them, which will be prevalent againſt Temptations and Oppoſitions, ariſeth from ſuch a *ſpiritual* View of them as gives an Experience of their Reality, Power and Efficacy upon our Minds. And this reſpects both the Renovation of the Mind it ſelf in Light and Faith, the Adheſion of the Will unto the things known and believed, with an holy, heavenly, unconquerable Love, and the conſtant Approbation of the good acceptable

ceptable and perfect Will of God in all things. Hence this Aſſurance, though it be neither that of Senſe, nor that of Reaſon, yet in the Scripture is compared with them, and preferred above them, as that which giveth the Mind a more certain Satisfaction than they can doe, although it be of another kind. And without this it is impoſſible that men ſhould attain any ſuch Evidence or full Perſwaſion of that *Evangelical Truth* which they may profeſs, as to ſecure them in their Profeſſion in ſuch a Juncture of Circumſtances and Occaſions as they may fall into.

Here therefore I place another Means and Cauſe of *Apoſtaſie* from the Truth of the Goſpel, after it hath been received and profeſſed. Multitudes in all Ages have been inſtructed in the Truth; ſome have been learned and knowing in the Doctrines of it. But whereas by reaſon of their *darkneſs* as being deſtitute of *ſpiritual Illumination*, they did not diſcern the things themſelves which they aſſented unto, in their ſupernatural, heavenly Nature and Glory, and thereon had no Experience of their proper Power and Efficacy on their own Minds, Affections, and Lives, they could not have any ſuch Evidence of their

Truth, as would upon Trials confirm their Adherence unto them, or ſecure them from *Apoſtaſie*.

Had the Minds of men been *transformed* in their *Renovation* to *prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect Will of God*; had they by *beholding of Spiritual things been changed into the ſame Image from Glory to Glory by the Spirit of the Lord*; they would not have abandoned the moſt important Doctrines of the Goſpel, as we know them to have done, nor have embraced fooliſh Imaginations in their ſtead, on every plauſible Courtſhip and Addreſs unto their Fancies. How came men under the *Papal Apoſtaſie* gradually to deſert the principal Truths of the Goſpel, and all the *ſpiritual* Glory of its Worſhip? Not diſcerning the internal Glory and Beauty of things Evangelical and purely Divine, not having an Experience of the *power* of them in and upon their own Minds, they choſe to comply with and give Admiſſion unto ſuch things whoſe outward painted Beauty they could diſcern, and whoſe Effects on their natural and carnal Affections they had experience of.

We have ſeen in all Ages, that men *learned* and *ſkilled* in the *Doctrines* of the Truth

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ſo as that they might have been looked on as *Pillars* of it, yet to have been as forward as any unto Apoſtaſie from it, when they have been tryed; yea ſuch have been the Leaders of others thereinto. So many of this ſort fell into *Arianiſme* and *Pelagianiſme* of Old, as ſome have done unto *Socinianiſme*, and many unto *Popery* in our dayes. When ſuch fall away, uſually they overthrow the Faith of ſome, and ſhake the Confidence of others. But the Apoſtle gives a double Relief againſt this Temptation: Firſt, the *ſtability* of Gods *Purpoſe* in the Preſervation of the Elect, and the *means* of Preſervation in the *Holineſs* of them that Believe; 1 *Tim.* 2. 17, 18, 19. And we may be aſſured concerning them all, that they never had that *intuition* into, nor Comprehenſion of *ſpiritual* things which alone could ſecure their *ſtability*. They never ſaw ſo much or that in them for which they ſhould be preferred above all other things. No man who forſakes the Truth ever ſaw the Glory of it, or had Experience of its Power. *They went out from us, but were not of us,* (ſaith the Apoſtle of ſuch Perſons) *for if they had been of us,* (whoſe Fellowſhip is with the Father and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt) *they would*

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no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifeſt that they were not all of us, 1 *Joh.* 2.19.

Thus when the Apoſtle had deſcribed the wofull Apoſtaſie of ſome among the *Hebrews*, he addes concerning them whoſe Preſervation he believed; *But Beloved we are perſwaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation*; *Heb.* 6.9. Whatever Knowledge men may have of the Doctrines of the Goſpel, and whatever Profeſſion they may make, unleſs they have withall thoſe things which are *inſeparable from Salvation*, ſuch as is the ſaving *Illumination* of the Holy Ghoſt, whereby the Darkneſs of our Minds is removed, there can be no Aſſurance that they will alwayes quit themſelves like Men, and *ſtand faſt in the Faith*. And this Conſideration doth not a little evidence the danger of a Defection from the Truth which attends the dayes wherein we live.

For firſt, It is from hence that we have ſuch a numerous Generation of *Scepticks* in Religion, among us. A ſort of men who pretend not to renounce or forſake the Truth, onely they will talk and diſpute about it with the greateſt Indifferency as to what is true or falſe. The *Scripture*, the

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holy Trinity, the Perſon of *Chriſt*, his *Offices*, the Nature of *Juſtification* and *Grace*, whether it be or be not, this or that Church, all or any in the World as to their *Profeſſion* and *Worſhip*, are weighed in the defiled tottering Scales of bold irreverend Diſcourſes. For ſome Reaſons known to themſelves this ſort of Perſons will own the publick Profeſſion of Religion, perhaps be Teachers in it. But on all Occaſions they fully manifeſt that they are utterly ignorant of the fundamental Differences between Truth and Error, and ſo give no firm aſſent unto what they do Profeſs. For this Difference lyeth in their Glory and Beauty in themſelves, and in their Power and Efficacy towards us. Spiritual heavenly *Truth*, by its Relation unto the Being, Infinite Wiſdome, Goodneſs, Love and Grace of God, by the Characters of all theſe things impreſſed on it and repreſented by it, is glorious, amiable, and deſireable. All Errour, as an Effect of Darkneſs, and by its Relation unto Sathan as the Head of the Apoſtaſie which drew off our Minds from the Original Eſſential Truth, is diſtorted, deformed, and brings the Mind into Confuſion. *Truth* is powerfull, and effectual to conform the Soul unto God,

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and to principle it with a Love of, and Power unto Obedience. Error turns the Mind aſide into crooked and by-paths of Folly or Superſtition, or Pride and Self-advancement. Were men Practically acquainted with this Difference between Truth and Error, it would take away that Indifferency in their Minds unto them, which this *Sceptical* humour doth diſcover. Truth ſo known in its Nature and Efficacy will beget that Reverence, that Love, that ſacred Eſteem of it ſelf in the Souls of men, as they ſhall not dare to proſtitute it to be bandied up and down with every fooliſh Imagination. And from this ſort of men, who are commonly the moſt bold and forward in undertaking the Conduct of others, by a pretended generous Contempt of their narrow Principles, groundleſs Scruples, and puſillanimous Fears, nothing is to be expected but a wiſe and ſafe Complyance with any Wayes or Means of Apoſtaſie from the Truth which ſhall be advantageouſly preſented unto them.

And by the Means of this Darkneſs, it is eaſie to conceive how uncertain and unſtable the Minds of the Generality of men, who perhaps alſo are ſomewhat ignorant

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(whereof we ſhall treat afterwards) muſt needs be in their *Aſſent* unto the Truth and the Profeſſion of it. They are no way able to diſcover it in ſuch a way or manner as to give them an Aſſurance which will be infallibly victorious againſt Temptations and Oppoſitions. Nor can they have that holy Love unto it, which will ſecure their Minds and Affections from being enticed and raviſhed from it. But all the difference between Truth and Error which they can diſcern, lying in bare different Notions and Apprehenſions, wherein alſo they are dark and unskilled, it is no wonder if at any time they make an eaſie Tranſcurſion from one to the other. So did the Body of the People loſe the Truth gradually under the *Papal Defection* without any great complaint, yea with much Complacency and Satisfaction. And it is to be feared, that multitudes are ready at once to ſteer the ſame courſe if Occaſion be offered unto them.

From this conſideration we may rectifie the ſeeming *Solœciſme* that is in the Profeſſion of Religion, or the Profeſſors of it. *Truth* in every kind is the onely Guide of the Minde in all its Actings. Wherein it proceeds not according unto it, it is always

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out of the way. Divine Truth is the ſole Conduct of the Mind in all its Actings towards God. It is the onely Fountain, immediate Cauſe and Rule of all our Obedience. But yet whereas in other things men generally walk in the Light of thoſe ſparks of Truth which they have received, we ſee that many by whom *Divine Truth* is owned and profeſſed in its greateſt Purity and higheſt Diſcovery, are oft-times no leſs wicked and vicious in their Lives, no leſs Enemies unto Holineſs, no leſs barren and unfruitfull in thoſe good and uſefull Works it guides and directs unto, than thoſe who having the greateſt Averſation from it, are under the Conduct of other Principles Erroneous and Superſtitious. Thus the Lives of the common ſort of *Proteſtants* are no better than thoſe of the *Papiſts*; nor theirs to be compared with ſome of the *Mahumetans*; yea by the Power of falſe and ſuperſtitious Apprehenſions impoſed on their Minds and Conſciences, ſome are carried out unto greater and more frequent Acts of Bounty and Charity, of the Mortification of the Fleſh, the denyal of its ſenſual Appetites and Satisfactions, than are to be found among the moſt who profeſs themſelves to be under the Conduct

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and Rule of Truth. Hence no Profeſſion of Religion, be it never ſo corrupt or fooliſh, is advanced amongſt us, but inſtantly, (at leaſt for a ſeaſon, and whileſt it is New) it pretends an Advantage as unto Life and Converſation againſt the *Truth* meaſured by the Lives of its common Profeſſors. Yea this is made the principal Motive and Argument to prevail with honeſt and well-meaning People unto a Complyance with the Profeſſion of their Way, becauſe of the Effects which (as it is pretended) it produceth in their Lives and Converſations, above thoſe which profeſs the Truth. And how prevalent this Pretence hath been among us, is known unto all.

Wherefore, I ſay, we cannot allow that the Lives of the *common ſort* of Profeſſors, ſhould be eſteemed a juſt and due Repreſentation of the *Doctrine* which they doe profeſs. It is true, that where it is not ſo, men will have no Benefit by their Profeſſion, nor will they be ſtedfaſt in it when a Trial ſhall befall them. Where the Mind is internally and really conformed unto the Truth, there the Actions of the Life may be allowed to repreſent *ſincerely* though not *perfectly* the Truths which are Believed.

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And he is no firm Chriſtian in any kind, he is brought into no ſpiritual Order, whoſe Mind doth not receive by the Spirit of Chriſt the transforming Influence of Evangelical Truth, and who exerts not the power of it in an holy Converſation, ſo as that he is not unwilling that what he *believeth*, may be impartially judged by what he *liveth*, as to Sincerity though not as to Perfection. But if we ſhould allow the Lives of men in General to be a Rule whereby Judgement might be ſafely paſſed in theſe things, it cannot be denyed but that ſometimes and in ſome Ages and Places, *Error* would (at leaſt for a ſeaſon) carry it in Glory and Reputation from the *Truth*, yea the Light of *Nature* from *Grace*, *Tradition* from the *Scripture*, and the *Alcoran* from the *Goſpel*.

But we have ſufficient ground of Exceptions unto this Interpretation and Expoſition of the Doctrine of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and that without the leaſt Apology for the ungodly Lives of its Profeſſors. Among theſe, that now inſiſted on is of the firſt Rank and Evidence. Multitudes of thoſe who profeſs the Truth never had a View of its *ſpiritual* Glory, becauſe of the Darkneſs of their Minds, and there-

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fore have no Experience of its Power and Efficacy, nor are their Hearts and Lives influenced or guided by it. For the Goſpel will not have its Effects on the Minds of men, unleſs it firſt communicates unto them thoſe internal ſpiritual Principles which are neceſſary unto all the Operations that it doth require. Put this New Wine into Old Bottles, and all is loſt, both Bottles and Wine alſo. The Doctrine of the Goſpel taken in Notionally into the old unrenewed corrupt Minds of men, is utterly loſt unto all the proper Ends of it. And wherever there is a Reformation of Life, with any diligent attendance unto Duties Moral or Religious wrought in Perſons by the Light and Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, they are the *immediate Effects* of thoſe Doctrines which it hath in common with the Light of Nature and the Law in its Power, and not of thoſe which are peculiarly its own. And this they ſeem to to underſtand well enough, who finding either in their own Experience, or from the Obſervation they have made of others, how ineffectual the Truth of Goſpel Myſteries is towards the Minds of carnal men, have upon the matter abandoned the Preaching of it, and have taken up onely

with thoſe Principles which are ſuited unto the Light of Nature and Convictions of the Law.

The Holineſs which the Goſpel requireth, is the transforming of our whole Souls into the Image and Likeneſs of God, with the Actings of renewed Nature in an univerſal *Approbation* of his good, perfect and acceptable will; *Rom.* 12. 2. But this will not be effected unleſs we can *behold the Glory of God in it*, whereby alone we may be *changed into the ſame Image from glory to glory*; 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. Nor can we ſo behold that Glory, unleſs he who commanded *Light to ſhine out of Darkneſs*, do ſhine into our Hearts to give us the Knowledge of it; 2 *Cor.* 4. 6. Hence is the Doctrine of it ineffectual in the Hearts and upon the Lives of many by whom its Truth is openly profeſſed.

It is otherwiſe with every *falſe Religion*. The Motives which they make uſe of, and the Inſtruments they apply unto the Hearts of men to effect the Reformation of their Lives, and to engage them unto ſuch Works and Duties as they require, are all of them ſuited either unto their Natural Light, or unto their Superſtitions, Fears, Deſires, Pride, and other depraved Affecti-

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ons. Thoſe of the firſt ſort, namely, ſuch as are ſuited unto *Natural Light*, are common in ſome degree or meaſure unto all Religion whatever, be it on other Accounts true or falſe. Every thing that is called *Religion* pretends at leaſt unto the improvement of *Natural Light*, as did the *Philoſophers* among the Heathen of Old. It urgeth alſo the Law ſo far as it is made known unto them, though by other Preſumptions and Prejudices ſome do abate and take off from its Force and Efficacy, making void the Commandments of God through their own Traditions. Whatever change is wrought or effected on the Minds and Lives of men, by vertue of theſe Principles, and Motives taken from them, doth not belong unto any one way in Religion more than another; Nor is it to be accounted unto the Glory or Advantage of any of them. In theſe things *Mahometiſme* and all falſe wayes in *Chriſtianity* have an equal ſhare and intereſt; unleſs where by ſome corrupt Opinions of their own, men deprave the Light of Nature, and the Rule of the Law it ſelf.

Some finding, as they ſay, more of Juſtice, Temperance, Veracity, Righteouſneſs in dealings, with common uſefulneſs unto

Mankind, among *Turks* and *Banians* than among the common ſort of Chriſtians, do fooliſhly begin to think, that their Religion is better than Chriſtianity. But as this *Scandal* will be ſorely required at the hands of them who give it by their flagitious Lives, ſo it is fooliſhly and wickedly taken by others. For thoſe Truths and Laws which produce theſe Effects in them, are common unto all Religions, and are equally ſuited unto the Light and Reaſon of all Mankind; and have more Evidence and Efficacy communicated unto them by the *Goſpel*, than by any other kind of Religion whatever. And ſo it is with them among our ſelves who would plead an Advantage unto their Profeſſion by the Effects of it in their Lives as to a Moral Converſation, when they can pretend unto no real Motive thereunto, namely, unto what is good and uſefull, and not meer Affectation and Hypocriſie, but what is owned and preſſed in the Doctrine of the Goſpel which we adhere unto. The Differences therefore that are in this kind, are not from the Doctrines men profeſs, but they ariſe from the Perſons themſelves who embrace them, with their various Luſts, Inclinations and Temptations.

It is evident therefore that whatever there is of Moral Good, Duty, or uſefulneſs among men in any *falſe Way of Religion*, it all proceeds from thoſe Principles, and is the Effect of thoſe Motives which are owned and improved in that which is *true*. And it may be eaſily evinced, that they are more cultivated and cleared, have more Evidence, Life, Light and Power given them by the Truths of the Goſpel, than by any other Means or Way whatever. And where they have not an *equal* Effect upon thoſe who profeſs that Truth, which they have on ſome by whom it is deſerted, it is from the Power of their own curſed Luſts and carnal Security. The Difference on the part of *Religion* it ſelf conſiſts in what is ſuperadded unto theſe general Principles by any Notions of it. Now this in every falſe Religion is what is ſuited unto the Natural Principles of mens Minds, their innate Pride, Vanity, Curioſity, Superſtition, irregular Hopes and Fears. Such among the *Romaniſts* are the Doctrines of *Merit*, of outward *Diſciplines*, of *Satisfactions for ſin*, of *Confeſſion*, *Penances*, of *Purgatory*, and the like. They were all of them found out to put ſome *awe* on the Minds and to have ſome *influence* on the

Lives of Men, who had loſt all *ſence* of the Principles and Motives of Goſpel Obedience; though ſome conſiderable reſpect was had unto the Benefit and Advantage of them by whom they were invented; for why ſhould men labour and beat their Brains meerly for others, without ſome Income and Revenue of Advantage unto themſelves? And it is no wonder if they produce in many, as they have done, great appearing Acts of Devotion, many outward works of Bounty and Charity, yea in ſome, real Auſterities of Life and Renunciations of the Pleaſures of the world. I doubt not but that the ſenſual wicked *Paradiſe* of *Mahomet*, doth effectually prevail in the Minds of many of his Followers unto that kind of Vertuous and devout Life which they ſuppoſe may bring them unto its Enjoyment.

The Enquiry then on the whole matter is, Wherefore the *Truths of the Goſpel* do not produce (in all by whom they are profeſſed) Effects as much more excellent than thoſe mentioned, as Truth is more excellent than Error, heavenly Light than Superſtition, Faith than frightfull Apprehenſions of faigned Torments, true Peace and Tranquility of Mind than outward Reputation

tation and Glory? And the principal Reason hereof is, because such Persons as are *barren in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, do not discern those Truths in their spiritual Nature, nor can therefore take in the Power and Efficacy of them on their Souls.

There is an *Holiness*, Obedience, and Fruitfulness in good Works, wrought, preserved and maintained by the *Truth of the Gospel* in them who are truely regenerated and sanctified thereby, who receive the proper Efficacy of it on their Minds and Souls, which differs *in the whole Kind* and Nature from any thing which the Principles and Motives before mentioned which have their Efficacy from their suitableness unto the depraved Affections of mens Minds, can produce. And this alone is acceptable with God; But it must be granted, that where men are *Ignorant* of the Power, and unacquainted with the internal Efficacy of the Gospel, their Lives under the Profession of the Truth may be as bad, and it is a great wonder they are not worse than those of the *Papists*, of the most Erroneous Persons, or even of the *Mahometans* themselves. For they have many superstitious Imaginations and false Principles,

that are ſuited to put ſome outward Reſtraint upon their Luſts, and to preſs them unto Actions praiſe-worthy in themſelves, But theſe being no way *influenced* by ſuch Apprehenſions, and being not under the Power of Goſpel Truth, it is a wonder (I ſay) if they exceed them not in all manner of wicked Converſation. It is not merely the *outward Profeſſion* of the Truth, but the *inward Power* of it, that is either uſefull unto the World or the Souls of Men.

And hence it is that the Preaching of any Perſon, which principally dwelleth on, and argueth from the things which the *Light of Nature* can of it ſelf reach unto, and the Convictions which are by the *Law*, is better accepted with and appears more uſefull unto *multitudes of common Profeſſors*, than the Declaration of the *Myſteries* of the Goſpel is. For ſuch things are ſuited unto the *Natural Conceptions* of men, and the working of their own Reaſons, which gives them a ſence of what Efficacy they have; but being in the Dark unto the *Myſteries* of the Goſpel, they neither ſee their Excellency, nor experience their Power. Nevertheleſs *they* and *they onely* are the true Spring, Cauſe, and Rule of all

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acceptable Obedience, even *the Power of God unto Salvation in them that do believe.* From the whole it appears how prone ſuch Perſons muſt be unto an Apoſtaſie from the Truth, who have no ſpiritual *Light* to diſcern its Glory, nor to let in the Power of it upon their Souls.

If then we would be *eſtabliſhed in the Truth*, if we would ſtand faſt in the Faith, if we would be preſerved from the danger of that Defection from the Goſpel which the World is prone, diſpoſed and enclined unto, it muſt be our principal Endeavour to have a ſpiritual Acquaintance with the things themſelves that are declared in the Doctrine of Truth which we do profeſs, and to have an Experience of their Efficacy upon our own Souls. Mere *Notions of Truth*, or the Knowledge of the Doctrines of it, enabling us to talk of them, or diſpute for them, will not preſerve us. And although this ſpiritual Light be the *Grace* Promiſe and Gift of God, yet is it that which we are to endeavour after in a way of *Duty.* And the Directions enſuing may contribute ſomewhat towards the right diſcharge of our Duty herein.

1. *Pray earneſtly for the Spirit of Truth to lead us into all Truth.* For this End is he

he promiſed by our Saviour unto his Diſciples, and there *are no Teachings like his.* If we learn and receive the Truth of the Goſpel merely in the Power and Ability of our Natural Faculties as we doe other things, we ſhall not abide conſtant unto them in ſpiritual Trials. What we *learn of our ſelves* in ſpiritual Things, we receive onely in the outward Form of it; what we are taught by the Spirit of God we receive in its *Power.* The Apoſtle grants that the *Spirit of Man*, his Mind, Reaſon and Underſtanding is able to conceive of and apprehend the *things of Man*, things merely Natural, Civil or Moral, which are cognate unto Humane Nature: But, ſaith he, *the things of God*, the Myſtery of his Wiſdom, Love and Grace in Chriſt Jeſus, *are known onley unto the Spirit of God*, and by him are they revealed unto them that do Believe, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9, 10, 11, 12. Without his eſpecial Aid men may by their Natural Sagacity and Induſtry attain an Acquaintance with the Doctrines of Truth, ſo as to handle them (like the *School-men*) with incredible Subtilty and Curioſity: But they may be far enough, for all that, from an eſtabliſhing Knowledge of *ſpiritual things.* That horrible Neglect which

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is among Chriſtians of this one Duty of *earneſt Prayer for the Teaching of the Spirit of Chriſt*; that ſcorn which is caſt upon it by ſome, and that Self-confidence in Oppoſition unto it which prevails in the moſt, ſufficiently manifeſts of what Nature is their Knowledge of the Truth, and what is like to become of it when a Trial ſhall befall them. The leaſt ſpark of *ſaving knowledge* in-laid in the Minds of the pooreſt Believers by the gracious Operations of the Holy Ghoſt, will be more effectual unto their own Sanctification, and more prevalent againſt Oppoſitions, than the *higheſt Notions* or moſt ſubtile Reaſonings that men have attained in *leaning unto their own underſtanding*. Wherefore the Scripture abounds in Examples, Inſtances and Directions for Prayer unto this End, that we may have the Aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit in Learning of the Truth of the Myſteries of the Goſpel, without which we cannot doe ſo in a due Manner. *Epheſ.* 1. 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. *Making mention of you in my Prayers, That the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him: The eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened, that ye may know what*

what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints. And what is the exceeding greatneſs of his Power to us-ward who Believe, according to the working of his mighty Power; which he wrought in Chriſt, when he raiſed him from the dead, and ſet him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. Chap. 3. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. *For this cauſe I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is Named, That he would grant you according to the Riches of his Glory, to be ſtrengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Chriſt may dwell in your Hearts by Faith, that ye being rooted and grounded in Love, may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and heighth; and know the Love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulneſs of God.* Col. 2. 1, 2, 3. *For I would that ye knew what great Conflict I have for you, and for them at* Laodicea, *and for as many as have not ſeen my Face in the fleſh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in Love, and unto all Riches of the full Aſſurance of Underſtanding, to the Acknowledgement of the Myſtery of God, and of the Father,*

Father, and of Chriſt, in whom are hid all the Treaſures of Wiſdom and Knowledge.

2. Reſt not in *any Notions of Truth*, unleſs you find that you have *learned it as it is in Jeſus.* What it is to learn the Truth as it is in Jeſus, the Apoſtle fully declares, *Epheſ.* 4. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. *But ye have not ſo learned Chriſt: If ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the Truth is in Jeſus; That ye put off concerning the former Converſation, the Old Man, which is corrupt according to the deceitfull Luſts; And be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind: And that ye put on that New Man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs.* This it is to learn the Truth as it is in Jeſus; namely, together with the Knowledge of it, to have an Experience of its Power and Efficacy, in the Mortification of Sin, in the Renovation of our Natures, and Transforming the whole Soul into the Image of God in Righteouſneſs and the Holineſs of Truth. When men learn that they may know, and are ſatisfied with what they know, without an endeavour to find the Life and Power of what they know in their own Hearts, their Knowledge is of little Uſe,

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and their Aſſent unto the Truth will have no Stability accompanying of it. The immediate End (with reſpect unto us) of the whole Revelation of the Mind and Will of God in the Scripture, is, that it may put forth a *ſpiritual practical Power* in our Souls, and that we may doe the things which are ſo revealed unto us. Where this is neglected, where men content themſelves with a bare Speculation of Spiritual Truths, they doe what lyes in them to fruſtrate the End, and *reject the Counſel of God* in them. If therefore we would know any *Evangelical Truths* in a due manner, if we would have that Evidence and Aſſurance of them in our Minds which may ſecure our Profeſſion againſt Temptations and Oppoſitions, let us not reſt in any Apprehenſions of Truth whoſe Efficacy we have *no Experience* of in our Hearts, nor think that we know any more of the Myſteries of the Goſpel than we find effectually working in the *Renovation* of our Minds, and the *transforming* of our Souls into the Image of the Glory of God in Chriſt.

3. Learn to eſteem more of a *little Knowledge* which diſcovers it ſelf in its *Effects* to be *ſanctifying* and *ſaving*, than of the higheſt

higheſt Attainments in Notions and Speculations, though gilded and ſet off by the Reputation of Skill, Subtility, Eloquence, Wit and Learning, which do not evidence themſelves by a-like Operations. We are fallen into dayes wherein men of all ſorts, Sects and Partyes are *vying for the Reputation of Skill*, Ability, Knowledge, Subtility and Cunning in Diſputes about Religion. And few there are who are caſt under ſuch Diſadvantages by apparent want of Learning, but that they hope to make it up one way or other, ſo as to think as well of their own Knowledge and Abilities as of other mens. He who hath learned to be meek, humble, lowly, patient, ſelf-denying, holy, zealous, peaceable, to purifie his Heart, and to be Uſefull in his Life, is indeed the Perſon who is beſt acquainted with Evangelical Truth. Wherefore let this Knowledge be eſteemed both in our ſelves and others above all that proud, preſumptuous, notional, puffing Knowledge which ſets up for ſo great a Reputation in the World, and we ſhall have experience of a bleſſed Succeſs in our purſuit of it.

4. Be not ſatisfied without a *Diſcovery* of ſuch a Goodneſs, Excellency and Beauty

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ty in *ſpiritual things* as may attract your Hearts unto them, and cauſe you to cleave unto them with unconquerable Love and Delight. This is that neceſſary, inſeparable Adjunct, Property, Fruit or Effect of Faith, without which it is not Eſſentially differenced from the *Faith of Devils*. That Knowledge, that Perception and Underſtanding of the Truth, which doth not preſent the things known, believed, perceived, as *lovely*, *excellent* and *deſireable* unto the Will and Affections, is *a Cloud without Water*, which every wind of Temptation will ſcatter and blow away. Do not therefore ſuppoſe that you have learned any thing of God in Chriſt, of the Myſtery of his Grace, of his acceptable and perfect Will; unleſs you ſee therein that Evidence of Infinite Wiſdome, Goodneſs, Holineſs, Love, in all things ſo ſuited unto the Eternal Glory of God, and Advantage of your own Souls in the uttermoſt Reſt, Peace and Satisfaction that they are capable of, as that you may admire, adore, delight in them and cleave unto them with an holy, prevalent, unconquerable Love. When you doe ſo, then will you be eſtabliſhed in the Truth, and be able to bid Defiance unto the Artifices of Satan with the *Solicitations*

tions of men, that would withdraw or ſeparate you from it. But I will not farther digreſs in theſe Diſcourſes.

Ignorance is another Occaſion of Apoſtaſie from the Truth, which was named under this Head of the *Depravation of the Minds of men.* It is the want of a due Perception, Underſtanding or Knowledge of the principal Doctrines of the Goſpel, with the Evidence which is given unto them, and the uſe of them in the Scriptures, that we intend hereby. A general Knowledge of ſome Doctrines without an Acquaintance with their Grounds and Reaſons, their Uſe and Effects in the Life of God, is of no value in theſe things. When perſons know not in Religion what *they ought to know, as they ought to know it*, or what it is their Duty to know, and without the Knowledge whereof they can perform no other Duty of Religion in a right manner, then are they culpably *ignorant*, and ſo as to be expoſed unto all other Evils that may befall them. For whether this be for want of *due Inſtruction* from others, or want of *Diligence* in themſelves to Learn, the Event is equally pernicious. In the firſt way the Holy Ghoſt aſſures us, That *where there is no Viſion the People periſh*;

Prov. 29. 18 The People will ſuffer where thoſe whoſe Duty it is ſo to doe, are not able to inſtruct them; For if the Blind lead the Blind, both muſt into the Ditch. And in general it is affirmed, That the *People are deſtroyed for lack of Knowledge*; *Hoſ.* 4. 6. Of ſuch ruinous conſequence by one means or other is the *Peoples Ignorance* of what it is their Duty to know. And by no one way doth it ſo effectually operate unto their Deſtruction, as by this of diſpoſing them to a *Defection from the Truth* which they have profeſſed, when any Trial or Temptation doth befall them.

Multitudes, yea whole Nations are often brought unto an outward general Profeſſion of the Truth of Religion, eſpecially with reſpect unto the Oppoſition of any other that is made thereunto. The Influence and Example of ſome that are in Power and Eſteem among them, falling in with a ſeaſon of encouraging Circumſtances, may produce this Effect, where men have little Knowledge of what they profeſs, and leſs Senſe of its Power and Efficacy. So the Body of the People of Old turned unto the Profeſſion of the true Religion under the *Reformation* made by *Joſiah*; *Neverthelefs*, (as the Prophet obſerves,)

ſerves,) *they did it not with their whole Hearts, but feignedly*; *Jer.* 3. 10. They did it not out of Love to the Truth, or a cordial Reſpect unto the wayes of God, but in an *hypocritical complyance* with their Ruler. The Converſion of the *Northern* Nations after they had poſſeſſed the *Weſtern* parts of the *Roman Empire*, was a Pledge of what their future Profeſſion was like to prove. The firſt Converſion of the World, was by the laborious Preaching of *Apoſtles*, *Evangeliſts*, and others, accompanyed with many miraculous Operations, exemplified in Holineſs of Life, and Patience under all ſorts of Perſecutions. And by this Means none were received or admitted into the Profeſſion of *Chriſtian Religion*, but ſuch as were Perſonally convinced of its *Truth*, inſtructed in its *Myſteries*, conformed in their Lives to its *Precepts*, and engaged unto its *Profeſſion* againſt Perſecution. But in theſe latter Converſions ſome Kings, Rulers or Potentates being dealt withall by *Popes* or other Princes, and thereon (perhaps with no ſmall Influence from Secular Conſiderations) admitting of the *Chriſtian Religion* in oppoſition unto *Paganiſme*, their *Allyes*, *Kindred* and *Subjects* uſually followed them

therein, having indeed little more of Chriſtianity than the Adminiſtration of ſome external Rites, and a Relinquiſhment of their Old Idols for the New Saints propoſed unto them. By this Means their firſt Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity* was laid in profound Ignorance of the Principles and moſt important Doctrines and Duties of the Goſpel. Hence it became moſt eaſie for them who were looked on as their Guides, to lead them into all thoſe *fooliſh Opinions*, Idolatrous Practices, ſuperſtitious Devotions, and blind Subjection to themſelves, whence at length iſſued the fatal *Apoſtaſie*. Knowing but little of what they ought to have known, and delighting not in Obedience unto what they did know, they willingly embraced themſelves, and God Judicially gave them up unto thoſe ſtrong Deluſions which turned them wholly from the Goſpel.

Thus the Generality of this Nation hath received and profeſſed the *Proteſtant Religion* in oppoſition unto *Popery*. And no doubt many did ſo through a ſincere and effectual Conviction of its *Truth* upon the firſt *Reformation*. But it is ſo come to paſs, that what through their own ſupine Negligence and Careleſneſs about all things

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Inviſible and Eternal, what through the Sloth, Ignorance, Lazineſs, and wretched Indifferency in Religion of ſome of thoſe that ſhould inſtruct them, Multitudes are become ſhamefully ignorant of the Rudiments and Principles of that Religion which they account themſelves to profeſs. So hath it been almoſt in all Ages and Places, after Profeſſion became Notional. Many will not make uſe of the Means of Inſtruction which they have, and more want that Means in an effectual meaſure. Nor (it may be) can there be an Inſtance given where there hath been *ſufficient care taken*, or at leaſt *ſufficient Proviſion made* for the Inſtruction of the Body of the People in all parts of it. Neither is that ordinary Courſe of the Miniſtry which is paſſant in the World, ſufficient to this purpoſe. Can any man who knows any thing of the Goſpel, or of the Nature of men with reſpect unto *ſpiritual things*, once ſuppoſe, that the Reading of Prayers unto a People, or the Rehearſing of a Sermon without Zeal, Life, Power, or Evidence of Compaſſion for the Souls of men, accompanyed with a light, vain, worldly Converſation, (as it is with many) ſhould anſwer the Apoſtolical pattern of *laying the Foundation*, and

then *carrying on of men* by continual Inſtruction *unto Perfection*? From hence (as alſo from other Reaſons obvious unto all impartial Obſervers,) it is, that Darkneſs covers the Earth and thick Darkneſs the People, ignorance prevailing on all ſorts of men. Some will not learn, ſome have none to teach them, ſome are engaged in the purſuit of ſenſual Luſts and Vanities, ſome ſwallowed up in the Love of, and cares about the things of the world, few in any Age have been conſcienciouſly diligent in the things which are of Eternal Concernment unto them.

This was that which facilitated the *Papal Apoſtaſie*, from whence it took its riſe, and by which it received its Progreſs. Thoſe who would on the Motives mentioned be accounted Chriſtians, and which it was the intereſt of the pretended Preſidents in Religion to have ſo eſteemed, being profoundly ignorant, they firſt accommodated the Practices of Religion unto their carnal ſuperſtitious Minds, and then gradually lead them into all Errours and Fables. For they were blind and knew not whither they went. So were the important Truths of the Goſpel abandoned for *Monkiſh Dreams*, for Legends of fooliſh lying Mi-

Miracles, and other Heatheniſh Superſtitions. It was by Ignorance (I ſay) principally that the People gave themſelves up unto the power of Seducers, which enabled the *Architects* of the *Roman* Apoſtaſie to carry them into Opinions, wayes and practices ſuited unto their ſecular Intereſt. And ſo ſenſible have they been of their Advantage hereby, as that ſome of them have commended *Ignorance* as the moſt uſefull Qualification of the people in Religion.

We may therefore well fix this as another Cauſe or occaſion at leaſt of Apoſtaſie; When men are ignorant of the Religion which themſelves profeſs, as to its Doctrines and the principal grounds of them; where they are like the *Samaritans*, who underſtood not their own Religious Worſhip which they had received by Tradition, *but worſhipped they knew not what*; *Joh.* 4. 22. They are no way able to defend themſelves againſt the leaſt Impreſſions of Seducers. They may plod on in the old Track of ſome formal outward Duties, but if any one meets them in their way, it is eaſie for him to turn them out of it. So the Apoſtle ſhewing the danger that Profeſſors were in becauſe of *Apoſtatical Seducers*, he aſſigns the Means of their Preſervation to

be *the Unction which they had received, whereby they knew all things*; *Joh.* 2. 19, 20, 27. Had they not been taught and inſtructed in the Truth, they could not at ſuch a ſeaſon have perſevered in the Profeſſion of the Faith. Yea ſuch Perſons are very ready to think that there is *ſomething worthy their conſideration* in what is propoſed unto them by the moſt corrupt Seducers, whereas they have really found nothing in what themſelves have ſo long profeſſed. For no man can find any real Benefit, Profit or Advantage in that whereof he is *ignorant*. So it is ſaid, that ſome by *good words and fair ſpeeches do deceive the hearts of the ſimple*, *Rom.* 16. 18. Every thing they ſay hath a plauſible Pretence and Appearance unto Perſons under that *Character*, ſo as that they are apt to be taken and pleaſed with it. Hence is that advice of the Apoſtle unto them who deſign Eſtabliſhment in Faith and Order. *Brethren, be not Children in underſtanding; howbeit in malice be ye Children, but in underſtanding be ye men*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 20. τέλειοι γίνεσθε ταῖς φρεσὶ; be ye *compleat*, *perfect*, well inſtructed in your Minds, fully initiated into the Doctrines of the Goſpel. Such the Apoſtle calls τελείους; *perfect men*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 7. *Heb.* 5. 14.

5. 14. Thoſe who in oppoſition hereunto are *Children*, that is, weak and ignorant, will alſo be uncertain and unſtable. They will be as Children *toſſed to and fro, carried about with every wind of Doctrine by the ſleight of men and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lye in wait to deceive*; *Epheſ.* 4. 14.

For let ſome crafty *Papal* Emiſſaries come among this ſort of People, and let them confidently tell them, that they neither have nor ever will have any *Benefit* by the *Religion* they profeſs; and that they have no Evidence or Aſſurance of the Truth of it; they tell them no more but what they will know to be true, if once they take it into conſideration. For whereas they have ſeemed to be *alwayes learning*, by reſorting to Church and the like outward Means whereby Religion is expreſſed, yet they never *came to the Knowledge of the Truth.* Wherefore, when by any means they are put unto a ſtand, and are forced to conſider themſelves, they are amazed to find how little it is that they believe of the Religion which they profeſs, or know of the ground of what they would be thought to believe.

Let ſuch Perſons adde, (as they will not fail

fail to doe,) that with them of *Rome* is full *Aſſurance*, that none ever miſtook the way who accompanyed them that are of the Old Religion which their Forefathers profeſſed ſo many Ages before this *New-fangledneſs* came up, which hath filled all things with Confuſion, Diſorder, Sects, and Diviſions; whereas before, all were of *one Mind* (which was the moſt plauſible Argument of *Paganiſme* againſt Chriſtianity,) every troubleſome perſonal Circumſtance of their preſent condition, makes them inclinable to believe, that it *may be* as they ſay. Let them tell them moreover of the Power granted unto the *Prieſthood* of their Church to pardon all ſorts of Sins, of the effectual *Interceſſion* of *Saints* and Angels, among whom they may chooſe out particular Patrons and Guardians for themſelves; of the Mercy, Grace, Goodneſs, Power and Intereſt in Heaven of the *bleſſed Virgin*, all continually exerciſed in the behalf of *Catholicks*, of the *Miracles* that are daily wrought among them, of the wondrous *Sanctity* and Devotion which ſome among them have attained, they begin to think that there is ſomewhat in theſe things which they can *feel* or ſee, whereas in their own Religion they can underſtand little

little or nothing at all. The *great things* of the Goſpel are *ſtrange things* unto them; they neither doe nor can underſtand them by all the diligence they think meet to uſe in this Caſe. But the things now propoſed unto them have the Nature of *Tales*, which the Mind of Man is accuſtomed unto, and apt both to receive and retain. And it is not imaginable how eaſie a *Tranſition* will prove, from a Religion whereof men know little or nothing at all, unto that which at one view preſents unto their Fancies and Senſes all that they need believe or doe, that they may be eternally happy.

Suppoſe one of another ſort come among ſuch perſons, and at once call them off from the Profeſſion of that *Religion* which they pretend unto, confidently requiring them to attend wholly *unto a Light within them*, which will be their Guide and direct them unto God. They find by *Natural Experience* that there is ſome ſuch Light within them, as that which he ſeems to propoſe unto them; for there is ſo in all men, as the Apoſtle declares, even the *Light of Conſcience accuſing or excuſing as unto Sin or Duty*; *Rom.* 2. 14, 15. Having therefore by reaſon of their *Ignorance* no

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Experience of any Power or Efficacy in that Religion which themſelves profeſs, they begin to think there is a Reality in what is propoſed unto them, and ſo are eaſily inveigled. For there is no ſecurity of his *conſtancy* for one moment when a Trial or Temptation ſhall befall him, who hath not Light or Knowledge enough of the Truth to give him ſome inward Experience of the Efficacy of what he doth profeſs.

But it is no way neceſſary to inſiſt any longer on that which is ſo evident both in Matter of fact and in the Reaſons of it. An *Apoſtaſie* from a *Traditional Profeſſion*, of thoſe Truths which indeed men underſtand not, is eaſie, and in a time of Temptation unavoidable. In all Ages multitudes have thus periſhed for want of Knowledge. For ſuch perſons are deſtitute of defence againſt any *external Cauſe* or Means of Defection. They have nothing in their Minds to oppoſe to *force*, nothing unto Seductions or *fraud*, nothing to the *Examples* of great Leaders, nothing to conflict with the *ſuperſtition* of their own Minds, and will therefore when Wind and Tide ſuits the Deſign, comply with any fair pretence for a Revolt.

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And herein lyeth no ſmall part of the danger of the publick Profeſſion of the Proteſtant Religion among us. By whoſe defect principally God knows, but it is incredible how *ſtupidly ignorant* Multitudes are. Such there are who know no difference in Religion, whileſt the *ſame Names* of God and Chriſt are commonly uſed, and ſame places frequented for Worſhip. Yet will this ſort of men ſhew great zeal and earneſtneſs againſt *Popery* and other Hereſies. None more forward to revile, contemn and proſecute them to their power, as ready as *Mahometans* are to perſecute *Chriſtians*, or *Papiſts* ſincere Believers, and that on the ſame Grounds. But if at any time they are put unto a ſtand, and neceſſitated to give an Account unto themſelves of the Reaſon of their own Religion, *what* it is they Believe, and *why* they do ſo, their Confidence will fail them, and like unto men fallen into *Croſs-paths* and wayes, they will not know what to doe. And on ſuch Occaſions they are the readieſt of all men in a kind of *Shame of themſelves*, to give up the Religion which they have profeſſed, for any other wherein it is promiſed they ſhall have more Skill, and by which they may have ſome Benefit, as

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it is pretended, whereas by their own they have had none at all.

Whatever therefore is amongſt us or elſe-where an occaſion of *Ignorance* among the People, it doth expoſe them unto a fatal Defection from the Truth. If thoſe upon whom it is incumbent to inſtruct them in the Knowledge of the Truths and Myſteries of the Goſpel, are unskilfull or negligent in the diſcharge of their Duty, they doe what lyeth in them to give them up bound hand and foot to the Power of their ſpiritual Adverſaries. And they will be found chargeable with no leſs guilt, who lay Obſtructions in the way of others who would willingly labour in the Inſtruction of them unto their power. A man would think from all Circumſtances, and all Indications of the preſent Inclinations of the Minds of men, that it were the chief Intereſt of all that really love the *Proteſtant Religion*, to preſerve its Profeſſors from Apoſtaſie, or any diſpoſition thereunto. That this will be done effectually without a continual *Inſtruction* of them in the Truths which are to be profeſſed, with their Grounds, Reaſons and Effects, is ſo fond an Imagination, as that it deſerves no conſideration; It is but to build Caſtles in the Air,

Air, to ſuppoſe that men will be kept *conſtant in the Profeſſion of Religion*, by outward Laws, the Obſervance of external Forms, and the Secular Advantages of ſome Perſons by it, wherein they are not concerned. They will not be ſo, I ſay, when a *Trial* ſhall befall them. There is no other Means that is appointed of God, or is rational in it ſelf, for the attaining of this End, but that thoſe who are ſo concerned, do what in them lyes *perſonally* to inſtruct the People in the Truth, encouraging of them unto Obedience by their own *Example*, and to prevail with them who have the ſame deſign, to be aſſiſting with them therein. But to cry out of the great *danger* of *Proteſtant* Religion in the growth of *Popery*, and at the ſame time not onely to be Negligent themſelves in the great Duty of communicating the real effectual Knowledge of it unto the Souls of men, but alſo to lay needleſs Obſtructions in the wayes of others who would ſincerely endeavour ſo to doe, is an unaccountable *Solœciſme* in Religion. Either we are not in earneſt in our pretended *Zeal* for the Truth, and our Fears of the prevalency of *Popery*, or we believe not that Inſtruction in the Truth is the onely

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Means to preſerve men in the uſefull Profeſſion of it, which is to renounce the Goſpel, and all rational Conſideration therewithall; or we are influenced by other things which we far more eſteem than *Evangelical* Truth and the Purity of *Religion*.

The *Reformation* of the Church conſiſted principally in the Deliverance of the people from Darkneſs and Ignorance. And if through our *Neglect* they ſhould be reduced again into the ſame State and Condition, they would be a ready Prey for the *Papacy* to ſeize upon. The Advice of the Apoſtle as to the Duty of all Goſpel Miniſters and Officers, in ſuch a Seaſon as we are fallen into, is that alone which will preſerve us, 2 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2, 3, 4.

But it may be ſuppoſed, that ſo *much Labour* and Diligence in the Inſtruction and Teaching of the People, as ſome aſſert, is altogether unneceſſary. It is enough if they be taught what are the *general Principles of Religion*, and do thereon comply with the Conduct of the Church whereunto they do belong. Beſides, if this *burden* be incumbent on the Miniſtry, that thoſe called thereunto are to have no Relaxation from conſtant ſedulous *Labouring in the Word*

Word and Doctrine, and are moreover required to exemplifie what they teach in the whole courſe of their Converſation, who would ever take upon him that Office that can advantage himſelf in the World any other way? It muſt needs prove very burdenſome, if we have a *Religion* that will not be preſerved in the Minds of men, without all this conſtant endleſs Toyl and Labour. In the *Roman* Church we ſee how eaſie a thing it is to keep up the People unto its Profeſſion, whileſt the *Clergy* are at Liberty to purſue and uſe the Pleaſures and Honours of this World; nor are any of them obliged unto thoſe irkſome and endleſs Pains which we ſeem to require. Yea they find by Experience that *Ignorance* in the *People* is the beſt Expedient to keep them in Subjection to the *Prieſts*, and then all things are ſecure. I wiſh that ſuch thoughts as theſe do not influence the Minds of ſome unto a Readineſs for a *Change*, if ſo be it might be effected without hazard. But if more Pains, Diligence, Labour, with Perſeverance therein, be required by us in the *Miniſters of the Goſpel* and *Guides of the Church*, than the Holy Ghoſt in the Scripture doth plainly, poſitively, frequently enjoyn, let it be re-

jected and deſpiſed. Alas! the beſt of us, of all that are alive, do come ſhort in many things of the Rules and Examples that are propoſed unto us therein. Nor doe I know on what *Grounds*, or by what Meaſures the moſt of us do intend to give up our Accounts at the laſt day. Nor is there any more impious Opinion nor more contradictory to the Goſpel, than that it is enough for the People to be inſtructed onely in the *general Principles* of Religion, without any farther Improvement or Growth in Knowledge. For thoſe who are thus called the *People*, are (I ſuppoſe) eſteemed *Chriſtians*, that is, Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt and Members of his Myſtical Body. And if they are ſo, their *Growth* in Underſtanding, their Edification in Knowledge, their being *carryed on unto Perfection*, their Acquaintance with the whole Counſel of God, with the Myſteries of his Love and Grace in Chriſt Jeſus, are as neceſſary for them as the *ſaving of their Souls* indiſpenſibly depending thereon, can render them. And if we will be *Miniſters of the Goſpel*, it will not be beſt for us to preſcribe unto our ſelves, our Rules and Meaſures of Duty. It will be our Wiſdom to accept of that Office on the terms limited

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by the Holy Ghoſt, or utterly to let it alone. And we muſt know, that the more exactly our Profeſſion is ſuited unto the Goſpel, the leſs mixture there is in it of any thing *humane*, the more difficult it is throughly to inſtruct men in the Knowledge of it. The Mind of man is far more apt and able to comprehend and retain *Fables*, *Errors* and *Superſtitions*, than Evangelical Truths. The former are Natural unto it; againſt the latter it hath a Diſlike and Enmity untill they are removed by Grace. Hence ſome will make a more appearing *Proficiency* in a falſe Religion in four or five dayes, than others will doe in the Knowledge of the Truth almoſt in ſo many years. We may have well-grown *Papiſts* in a Months time that ſhall be expert in the Myſteries of their Devotion; and there is another Profeſſion that *two or three dayes* will bring men unto a Perfection in. But *ſlow* is the progreſs of moſt in learning the Truth and Myſteries of the Goſpel. If peculiar Diligence and conſtant Sedulity be not uſed in their Inſtruction, they will be made a Prey unto the next Opportunity for a Defection from the Truth.

CHAP. VI.

Pride and Vanity of Mind, Sloth and Negligence, Love of the World, Cauſes of Apoſtaſie; The Work of Sathan and Judgements of God in this Matter.

THe innate *Pride* and *Vanity of the Minds of men*, is another Means whereby they are diſpoſed and inclined unto an *Apoſtaſie* from the Profeſſion of Evangelical Truth. With reſpect hereunto the Deſign and Work of the Goſpel is to caſt down *Imaginations*, and *every high thing that exalteth it ſelf againſt the knowledge of God* (taught therein,) *bringing into Captivity every thought unto the Obedience of Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 10. 3. The Mind of Man is Naturally lifted up with high Thoughts in it ſelf and of it ſelf. That it is ſufficient unto all the Ends of its Being, all the Duties of its Condition, without any eſpecial Aid or Aſſiſtance from above, is the prevailing Principle whereby it is acted.

acted. Men do not onely by Nature ſay, *With our Tongue we will prevail, our Lips are our own; Who is Lord over us? Pſal.* 12.4. we have a Sovereignty over all our outward Actions; but alſo that nothing is, or can, or ought to be required of us, but what we have *Power* in our ſelves to comprehend, comply withall and perform; this in all Ages of the Church under various forms and pretences hath been contended for. The true ſtate of all Controverſies about the *Powers of Nature and Grace*, is this; That on the one hand the Minds and Wills of men are aſſerted to be *ſelf-ſufficient* as to internal Abilities unto all Duties of Obedience neceſſary unto eternal Bleſſedneſs; on the other, That we have *no ſufficiency* of our ſelves, but that all our ſufficiency is of God; See 2 *Cor.* 3. 5. *Chap.* 9. 8. This Principle which ſprung immediately out of that Pride, whereby aiming at an Enlargement of our ſelf-ſufficiency we utterly loſt what we had, was never yet rooted out of the Minds of the generality of profeſſed Chriſtians.

In all things the Mind of Man would be its own Meaſure, Guide and Rule, continually teeming with theſe two Evils:

(1) It exalts *Imaginations* of its own,

which it loves, applauds, dotes on and adheres unto. This is the Original of *Hereſie*, this hath given Birth, Growth and Progreſs to Error. For God made *Man upright, but they ſought out many Inventions*, *Eccleſ.* 7. 29. Seeking out and exalting *Inventions* of our own in things Spiritual and Religious, is the principal and moſt pernicious Conſequent of our fall from that ſtate of *Uprightneſs* wherein of God we were created.

(2) It makes *it ſelf* the ſole and *abſolute Judge* of what is Divinely propoſed unto it, whether it be *true* or *falſe*, *good* or *evil*, to be received or rejected, without Deſire or Expectation of any *ſupernatural Guidance* or Aſſiſtance. And whatever is unſuited unto its own prejudicate Imaginations, it is ready to ſcorn and deſpiſe. That therefore which we are now to demonſtrate, is, That where this *Pride* and Principle are predominant, where the one is not *mortified* by Grace, nor the other *eradicated* by Spiritual Light, there men can never receive the Truths of the Goſpel in a due Manner, and are ready to renounce them when they have by any Means been brought unto the Profeſſion of them for a ſeaſon. For,

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The Goſpel, that is, the Doctrines of it, and Truths contained in it, is propoſed unto us *in the Name* and on the *Authority* of God, having his Image and Superſcription upon it. It hath ſuch Impreſſions of Divine Wiſdom, Goodneſs, Grace, Holineſs, and Power upon it, as manifeſts it to be the *glorious Goſpel of the bleſſed God*, 1 *Tim.* 1.11. Hence it ought to be received with an holy Reverence, with a due ſenſe of the Glory of God, and as his *Voyce ſpeaking unto us from Heaven*. Hence is the Caution of the Apoſtle, that we would not *refuſe* or turn from *him who ſpeaketh from Heaven*, *Heb.* 12. 25. Without this it will never be duely received, truely underſtood, nor ſteadfaſtly believed. It is not to be received as *the Word of Men*, *but as it is in Truth the Word of God*, 1 *Theſſ.* 2.13. It muſt be received with that Frame of Spirit, with that Submiſſion, that Subjection of Soul and Conſcience, which becomes poor Worms of the Earth when they have to doe with the great and holy God, expreſſed *Gen.* 18. 27. So our Saviour tells us, that *unleſs we be converted and become as little Children, we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.* Unleſs we deny our ſelves and all our own Imaginations, unleſs

we become *humble* and teachable, we can never arrive at an uſefull Acquaintance with the Myſteries of it. And he convinced the learned *Phariſees*, that by reaſon of their Pride, Vain-glory and Hypocriſie, they could not perceive or underſtand the Doctrine which he taught.

God promiſeth that he will *teach the Meek* or Humble *in Judgement*; the *Meek will he teach his way*, Pſal. 25. 9. *The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will ſhew them his Covenant*, Ver. 14. *Whom ſhall he teach Knowledge? whom ſhall he make to underſtand Doctrine? Them that are weaned from the Milk, and drawn from the Breaſts*, Iſa. 28. 9. Unleſs Men become as weaned Children, as *David* affirms of himſelf, *Pſal.* 131. 2. when *his Heart was not haughty nor his Eyes lifted up*, Ver. 1. God will not teach them. There is therefore no ſuch effectual Obſtruction of Divine Teachings as the *Pride* of mens Minds, which is utterly inconſiſtent with them. Hence it is that Men come with carnal Confidence in themſelves, the Ability and *Sagaeity* of their own Minds, to the Conſideration of the Goſpel and the things contained in it, without the leaſt peculiar Awe or Reverence of God from whom it is. And

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hence do they ſuppoſe themſelves without more adoe, *competent Judges* of the Mind of the Holy Ghoſt in all Divine Revelations. Can men who have once read the Scripture imagine that this is the way to *learn Heavenly Truth*, or to partake of the Teachings of God? Will the ſame Frame of ſpirit ſuffice them in this Deſign, as that which they have when they are exerciſed about their other Occaſions? When we conſider how men for the moſt part *learn the Truth*, we need not wonder to ſee how eaſily they *unlearn* and forſake it. If the Truth at any time be entertained by a Soul whoſe Mind is *unhumbled*, and whoſe Affections are unmortified, it is a troubleſome Inmate, and will on the firſt Occaſion be parted withall. It is true, we ought to imploy the utmoſt of our Rational Abilities in the Inveſtigation of Sacred Truth: But yet if therein we follow the Conduct of our own Minds, diving perhaps into Subtilities and Niceties, forſaking an humble dependance on the Teachings of God, it may be under Apprehenſions of ſingular Wiſdom, we betray our ſelves into ruinous Folly. This was that which corrupted all the Endeavours of the *School-men*, and left them in the height of their Enquiries to *wax vain in*

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their Imaginations. The way of handling *ſpiritual things* in a *ſpiritual Manner*, in the *Words* which the *Holy Ghoſt teacheth*; that is, not with curious ſubtle Reaſonings and Inventions of carnal unſanctified Minds, but with that Evidence and plainneſs in Argumentation, ſuited practically to affect the Minds and Conſciences of men, which the Scripture giveth us both Example and Rule for, was deſpiſed by them. But they came to the ſtudy of Sacred Things with their Minds ſtuffed and prepoſſeſſed with Philoſophical Notions and Conceptions, with Sophiſms, Diſtinctions, and various Expreſſions of the *Serpentine* Wits of men, which they mixed with *Divinity*, or the Doctrine of the Scripture, wofully corrupting, debaſing and perverting it thereby. Moſt of their Diſputes were ſuch as had never had Foundation nor Occaſion in the world, if *Ariſtotle* had not invented ſome odde Terms and Diſtinctions remote from the common Underſtanding and Reaſon of men wiſer than himſelf. To enquire into *Divine Revelation* with an holy, humble Frame of Heart, waiting and praying for Divine Teaching and Illumination of Mind, that themſelves might be *made wiſe* in the Knowledge of the Myſteries of the Goſpel,

Goſpel, and able to inſtruct others in the Knowledge and Feat of God, it never came into their Minds. But being furniſhed and *puffed up* with a Conceit of their own *ſagacity*, Philoſophical Ability, and diſputing Faculty, harnaſſed with *Syllogiſmes*, *Diſtinctions*, *Solutions*, and moſt prepoſterous Methods of Craft, they came with Boldneſs on Chriſtian Religion, and forming it to their own Imaginations, dreſſing it up and expoſing of it in fooliſh terms of Art, under a ſemblance of *wondrous Subtility*, they wholly corrupted it, and drew off the Minds of men from the *Simplicity of the Truth* as it is in *Chriſt Jeſus*. Not one *Article* of Religion did this proud ſelf-conceited Generation of men leave, that (whether their Concluſions were true or falſe about it,) any man could come to the underſtanding of it, who had not been a better Proficient in the School of *Ariſtotle* than of Chriſt. To Believe and Teach the Doctrine of the Scripture, though with *ſound Reaſon* and Judgement, and in the way of the Scripture to affect the Minds and Conſciences of men without their Philoſophical Notions, Niceties, Diſtinctions, whereby they had carved a corrupt, depraved, monſtrous Image of all things, and the

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Knowledge of them, was among them to be an Heretick or a Block-head. By the Pride, Confidence, and pretended Subtilty of theſe men, was *Religion* totally corrupted, and the *Fountains* poyſoned from whence others ſought for the *Waters* of the Sanctuary. Even what was left of *Truth* among them was ſo debaſed, ſo deveſted of its native heavenly Glory, Beauty and Majeſty, was rendred ſo deformed and unſuited unto that *ſpiritual* Light wherein alone it can be uſefully diſcerned, as to render it altogether uſeleſs and inefficacious unto its proper Ends. Nor are we ever in more danger to ſubduct our ſelves from under the *Teachings of God*, than when we lean unto our own Underſtandings in our Enquiries into *ſpiritual* things, ſo as to forget that *humble lowly frame of Heart* wherein alone we are meet to be Taught, or to Learn in a due manner. And this is one way whereby men through the *innate Pride* of their Minds are obſtructed in the Receiving, and diſpoſed unto the *Relinquiſhment* of Evangelical Truths.

Again; It is confeſſed that there is nothing propoſed unto us in the Goſpel that is *contrary* unto Reaſon, as Reaſon is the due Comprehenſion and Meaſure of things

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as they are in their own Nature. For how ſhould there be ſo, ſeeing it is in it ſelf the principal external Effect of the Reaſon or *Wiſdom of God*, which hath given unto all things their Natures, Properties and Meaſures? But yet there are things revealed in it which are *above the Comprehenſion of Reaſon*, as planted in the finite limited Underſtanding of Man. Nor is the Ground hereof the *accidental* Corruption of our Nature, but the *eſſential* Conſtitution of its Being. There are (I ſay) Divine Myſteries in the Goſpel whoſe *Revelation* we may underſtand, but the *Nature* of the things themſelves we cannot comprehend. And this Reaſon it ſelf cannot but acknowledge. For whereas it knows it ſelf to be finite, limited and bounded, how ſhould it be able perfectly to comprehend things Infinite, or all the Effects of Infinite Wiſdom. *Can we by ſearching find out God? can we find out the Almighty unto Perfection? It is high as Heaven, what can we doe? deeper than Hell, what can we know? the Meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea*; *Job* 11.7, 8, 9. Theſe things ſo exceed the natural and duely proportionate Objects of our Underſtandings, as that we cannot find them out to *Perfection.*

on. The Reaſon of Man hath nothing here to doe, but humbly to comply with the *Revelations* that are made of them.

Moreover, there are in the Goſpel Things that are unſuited, yea *contradictory* unto Reaſon as it is Corrupted. Reaſon in us is now no longer to be conſidered merely as it is *finite* and Limited, but as in the *Subject* and Exerciſe of it, it is impaired, depraved and corrupted. To deny this, is to deny the fundamental Principle and Suppoſition that in all things the Goſpel proceedeth on; that is, That *Jeſus Chriſt* came into the World to reſtore and repair our Natures. In this ſtate as it is unable of it ſelf to *diſcern* and judge of *ſpiritual Things* in a due manner, ſo it is apt to frame unto it ſelf *vain Imaginations*, and to be prepoſſeſſed with innumerable *Prejudices*, contrary unto what the Goſpel doth teach and require. And whatever it doth ſo fancy or frame, the Mind eſteems as proper Acts and Effects of Reaſon as any it exerciſeth or is capable of.

With reſpect unto both theſe, namely, the *Weakneſs of Reaſon* as it is Finite and Limited, and the *Depravation of Reaſon* as it is Corrupted, it is the Deſign of the Goſpel to bring every thought into Captivity

tivity unto the Obedience of Faith. For,

1. As to the former it requires men to Believe things *above their Reaſon*, merely on the Authority of Divine Revelation. Things they muſt believe, *which Eye hath not ſeen*, nor *Ear heard*, neither have they *entred into the Heart of man to conceive*, onely they are *revealed unto us by the Spirit*, 1 *Cor.* 2. 9, 10. It will not admit of an Enquiry *how* thoſe things may be which the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken. The Sence and Meaning of the *Revelation* it may enquire into, but cannot comprehend the things Revealed. *Nobis Curioſitate opus non eſt poſt Jeſum Chriſtum, nec Inquiſitione poſt Evangelium; cum credimus nihil deſideramus ultra credere, hoc enim priùs credimus, non eſſe quod ultra credere debemus. Tertull. Præſcrip. adv. Hæreſ.* And when of Old, the Wiſe, the Scribes, the Diſputers of this World, would not ſubmit hereunto, under the ſuppoſed conduct of their Reaſon, they fell into the moſt brutiſh Unreaſonableneſs, in Judging the *Wiſdom of God* to be *Folly*, and his *Power* to be *Weakneſſe*, 1 *Cor.* 1. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25. And it is an unparallel'd Attempt of *Atheiſm* which ſome in our dayes (who would yet be

be accounted Chriſtians) have engaged in: They would exalt *Philoſophy* or *humane Reaſon* into a Right of *Judicature* over all *Divine Revelations*. Nothing muſt be ſuppoſed to be contained in them, but what is meaſurable by *its* Principles and Rules. What pretends to be above them they ſay it ought to be rejected, which is to make it ſelf *Infinite*, or the Wiſdom and Underſtanding of God *Finite* and Limited. Wherefore, as to the things that are Revealed in the Goſpel, becauſe many of them are abſolutely *above* the Comprehenſions of our Minds or Reaſons, they are not the *Judge* of them, but are the Servants of Faith onely in bearing witneſs unto them. *For the things of a Man knoweth the ſpirit of a Man that is in him, but the things of God knoweth no Man but the Spirit of God*; 1 *Cor.* 2. 11, 12. In brief, To affirm that we can be obliged to *believe no more* than we can comprehend, or nothing but what we can perfectly underſtand the Nature of in it ſelf, or that we may reject what is really *above Reaſon*, on a Suppoſition that it is *contrary* unto Reaſon, is to renounce the Goſpel, and therewith all Divine Re-Revelations. And this is ſpoken not of Reaſon as it is *corrupted*, but merely as

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it is Humane Reaſon, *Finite* and Limited.

2. As in things *infinite*, *ſpiritual* and *heavenly*, the Goſpel propoſeth unto men things quite *above* their *comprehenſion*, ſuppoſing their Reaſon to be *pure* and incorrupted, onely allowing it to be that which is *finite* and limited; ſo in things which Practically reſpect the Obedience of Faith which it doth require, it preſcribeth things *contrary* unto our natural Conceptions, or Reaſon as it is in us *depraved*. For the natural Conceptions of our Minds about Religious Duties and the way of Living unto God, are all of them ſuited unto the *Covenant of Works*: For they are the Effects of the Remainders of that Light which did direct us to walk with God thereby. But hereunto the Diſpoſal of things in the *Covenant of Grace* is *diametrically* oppoſed, ſo that their Accounts will never intermixe. *Rom.* 11. 6. Yea the *carnal Mind*, that is, Reaſon as it is corrupted, acts its Contradiction unto the Will of God as revealed in the Goſpel with *Enmity* and Hatred; *Rom.* 8. 7. And for thoſe Duties which are ſuited unto the Light of Nature, the Goſpel doth ſo *change* them with the Reſpect it gives them unto the Mediation of Chriſt

and the Efficiency of the Holy Spirit, as that corrupted Reaſon defies them being ſo qualified, as foreign unto its Conceptions. The Duties themſelves it can approve of, but not of their *Reſpect* unto Jeſus Chriſt, whereunto they are diſpoſed by the Goſpel.

Hence it is that of Old thoſe who pretended ſuch an *abſolute Sovereignty* in their own Reaſon, as to admit of nothing as Truth but what its Dictates complyed withall, were of all men the ſloweſt to *receive*, and the forwardeſt to *oppoſe* the Myſteries of the Goſpel; Becauſe they were *above* it in ſome things, and *contrary* unto it in more, as it is in moſt things corrupted, they looked on them as *folly* and ſo deſpiſed them. This the Apoſtle declares and records; 1 *Cor.* chap. 1ſt. 2d. Eſpecially was it ſo among them who unto the *vain Imaginations* wherein in general their *fooliſh heart was darkened*, had ſuperadded ſome peculiar Sect in *Philoſophy* which was of Reputation among the Wiſe-men of the World. For they conceived and maintained all the *Maxims* of their Sect as the abſolute Dictates of Right Reaſon, though moſt of them were fooliſh Fancies, either taken up by *Tradition* or *ſophiſtically* impoſed

poſed on their Underſtandings. Hence every thing that was contrary unto ſuch Principles, or inconſiſtent with them, they looked on as oppoſite unto *Reaſon*, and ſo Deſpiſed it. Nor is it much otherwiſe at this day with many Chriſtians, who make the *Traditional Principles* of their Sect or Party, the *Rule* whereby every thing that is in Religion propoſed unto them, may be examined. Thus though the Generality of *Philoſophers* and Wiſe-men at *Athens* rejected the Doctrine of the Apoſtle, yet were there none ſo forward and fierce in their Oppoſition unto him, ſo contemptuouſly proud in their Cenſures of him, as were the *Epicuræans* and *Stoicks*, *Act.* 17.18. And the Reaſon hereof was, becauſe the Doctrine which he taught was eminently contrary to the *Maxims* of their peculiar Sects. For whereas the *Epicuræans* denyed the *Providence* of God in the Government of the World, the *Exiſtence* of the *Souls* of Men after this Life, all Eternal *Rewards* or *Puniſhments*, there was no Admiſſion of any one word of the Apoſtles Doctrine without a Renunciation of all their impious Sentiments, and ſo the Ruine of their Sect. And as for the *Stoicks*, the fundamental Principle of their *Philoſophy* was,

That a Man ſhould look for all Bleſſedneſs or Happineſs in and from Himſelf alone, and from the things that were in his own Power, as being every way ſufficient unto himſelf for that End. All that the Apoſtle taught concerning the *Mediation of Chriſt* and the *Grace of God* by Him, was alſo *diametrically* oppoſite unto this Principle. Wherefore, thoſe of theſe two *Sects* oppoſed him in a peculiar manner; not onely from the Pride and Darkneſs that is naturally in the Minds of men, and improved by the Advancement of corrupted Reaſon *above* its own proper Place and Dignity; but from the *prejudicate Opinions* which on the Reputation of their Sects they adhered unto, as aſſured Dictates of right Reaſon in general. And when ſome ſuch Perſons as theſe, afterwards upon a general Conviction of its Truth took upon them a Profeſſion of the Goſpel, they were the men who corrupted its principal Myſteries by their vain Philoſophy, as the Apoſtle intimates, *Col.* 2. 8. So *Tertullian: Hæreſes à Philoſophiâ ſubornantur. Inde Æones & formæ, & neſcio quæ, & Trinitas hominum apud Valentinum, Platonicus fuerat. Inde Marcionis Deus melior de tranquilitate, à Stoicis venerat; & uti anima interire*

interire dicatur ab Epicuræis obſervatur; & ut Carnis Reſtitutio negatur, de unâ omnium Philoſophorum Scholâ ſumitur.

We may apply theſe things unto our preſent purpoſe. The Deſign of the Goſpel in all its eſpecial Truths and Myſteries, is, to bring *every Thought in Subjection unto the Obedience of Faith.* Hence is that Direction which Fleſh and Blood will never comply withall; *If any man among you ſeemeth to be Wiſe in this World, let him become a Fool that he may be Wiſe,* 1 *Cor.* 3. 18. Unleſs Men renounce their carnal Wiſdom in all its Principles, Effects and Operations, they will never become *Wiſe* with that Wiſdom which is from above. And he who knoweth not what it is ſo to become a *Fool*, be he who he will, was never yet *Wiſe* towards God. Wherefore, when men have taken on them the *outward Profeſſion* of the *Goſpel*, they begin to find upon Enquiry, that the Myſteries and Principles of its *Doctrine* are unſuited unto the *natural Pride* of their Minds, and inconſiſtent with that abſolute *Sovereignty* which they would in all things give unto their own Reaſon. Hereon many *Inventions are ſought out* to caſt off the Yoke of *Faith*, and to re-inthrone *Reaſon* in the Room thereof.

Not that Men depart from the Faith with this expreſs Deſign, but this is that which ſecretly influenceth them thereunto. Hence the Generality of thoſe who forſake the *Truth*, on this Ground and Occaſion, are ſuch as truſting *too ſoon* to their own *Rational Abilities*, having neither Will, nor Humility, nor Induſtry, to enquire into the *Principles* and *Reaſons* of *Truth* in a due manner, do give up themſelves unto the Conduct and Teaching of others, who have invented Opinions more ſuited unto the *innate Pride* of their Minds and *carnal Reaſonings*. And ſome by an over-earneſt purſuit of the workings of their own Rational Faculties in *ſpiritual things*, having ſubducted their Minds from that *humble Frame* wherein alone they are capable of *Divine Teaching*, are betrayed into the ſame Miſcarriage. All ancient *Hereſies* ſprung from this Root; yea, thoſe of them which are moſt abſurd and fooliſh, and moſt *diametrically* oppoſite unto right Reaſon, aroſe from a Pretence thereof. For when Men will have Reaſon to have an abſolute *Supremacy* in Religion, it is unavoidable but they muſt judge that their *own* is the Reaſon which is intended; and that ſome may be led hereby into very fooliſh Imaginations,

ginations, is eaſie to be conjectured, unleſs we ſhall ſuppoſe all men to be equally wiſe and ſober.

I ſhall briefly exemplifie theſe things in one Inſtance, and that in a prevalent Apoſtaſie from the Truth, and which at preſent is viſibly progreſſive in the World, This is that of *Socinianiſme.* And I ſhall give an Inſtance herein, becauſe the Poyſon of it is highly Efficacious where it meets with the Complexion and Conſtitution of Mind before deſcribed, and is more diffuſed than many are aware of. For although the Name of it be generally condemned, and there are ſome Opinions comprized under it, whoſe Profeſſion is inconſiſtent with the Intereſt of the moſt, yet all thoſe *Deviations* from the Truth which we have amongſt us under ſeveral Denominations, are Emanations from that corrupt Fountain. Yea the whole of it being *a Syſteme* of Opinions craftily ſuited unto the firſt Notions and Conceptions of corrupted Reaſon, and the in-bred Pride of Mens Minds in them, who on any Account own *Divine Revelation*, the firſt Propoſal of them finds ready Entertainment with many of thoſe whoſe Souls are not prepared and fortified againſt them by a *ſpiritual* Expe-

rience of the Excellency, Power, and Efficacy of the Myſteries of the Goſpel. They no ſooner hear of them but they know they expreſs what they would *have*, as gratifying all the corrupt Deſires and carnal Reaſonings of their Minds.

There are, as was obſerved before, two ſorts of things in the Doctrines of the Goſpel. (1) Such as are *above* the Comprehenſion and Meaſure of Reaſon in its beſt Condition, as it is in us *Limited* and *Confined*. (2) Such as are *contrary* unto it as *Corrupted* and *Depraved*. And unto theſe two Heads is this kinde of *Apoſtaſie* reducible.

1. What is *above Reaſon*, Incomprehenſible by it, thoſe of this way do abſolutely reject. Such are the Doctrines of the *Trinity*, and of the *Incarnation of the Son of God*. Becauſe *the Things* taught in theſe Doctrines are not comprehenſible by their Reaſon, they conclude that they are repugnant unto right Reaſon. And by others the ſame Doctrines are refuſed as not compliant with the *Light* that is within them. For the *Exiſtence of the Divine Nature in Three diſtinct Perſons*, with the *Hypoſtatical Union* of the Natures of God and Man in the ſame Perſon, they cannot acknowledge.

ledge. Theſe things, ſo fully, ſo plainly, ſo frequently revealed and aſſerted in the Scripture, ſo atteſted by the Primitive *Catholick Church*, are rejected on no other Reaſon, but that they are *againſt Reaſon*; nor is there any pretence that they are ſo, but becauſe they are *above* it. When they have puzled themſelves with *Nicodemus* his Queſtion, *How can theſe things be?* they peremptorily deny their Exiſtence, becauſe they cannot comprehend the Manner of it.

2. As unto thoſe things which are *contrary unto Reaſon as corrupted*, theſe they deprave and wreſt unto a complyance therewithall: So they deal with the Doctrine of the *Attributes of God*, of his *Eternal Decrees*, of the *Office and Mediation of Chriſt*, of *Juſtification* by his Righteouſneſs, of the *Power and Efficacy of the Grace* of the *Holy Spirit* in the Converſion of Sinners, and of the *Reſurrection* of the Dead. Becauſe they cannot bring their Reaſon as corrupted and depraved unto a complyance with theſe Truths, they will force, hale, torture and rack the Truths themſelves to bring them into *ſlavery* unto their own Reaſons, or carnal fleſhly Conceptions of *ſpiritual* things. For allowing

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the Words, Terms, and Propoſitions wherein they are expreſſed, they put abſurd ſences upon them, deſtructive unto the Faith, and contrary to the whole Scope and Deſign of the Scripture; ſo do they endeavour expreſſely to bring every Divine Revelation into *Captivity* unto the bondage of their own perverſe Reaſonings and Imaginations.

It is therefore evident that this kind of Apoſtaſie ſprings from no other Root but the *Pride of the Minds of Men*, refuſing to admit of Evangelical Truths on the meer Authority of Divine Revelation, where they are *above Reaſon* as it is *limited*, or *contrary* unto it as *corrupted*. On theſe terms the Goſpel can no where keep its Station, nor will it foregoe its Prerogative by ſubjecting it ſelf to be tryed by theſe uncertain Meaſures, or weighed in theſe uneven tottering Ballances. The *humble*, the *meek*, the *teachable*, thoſe who are made free and willing to captivate their Underſtandings unto the Obedience of Faith, are thoſe alone with whom it will abide and continue.

But it may be ſaid, that this being onely one private *Hereſie*, of no great Extent or Acceptation in the World, there is no danger

ger of any influence from it into a more general Defection. So it may be, it ſeems unto many, but I muſt acknowledge my ſelf to be otherwiſe minded; and that for two Reaſons.

1. Becauſe of the Advance which it maketh every day in the Addition of new, bold, proud *Imaginations* unto what it hath already made its ſucceſſefull Attempts in. For in the purſuit of the ſame Principles with thoſe of the men of this way and Perſwaſion, not a few begin abſolutely *to ſubmit the Scripture* and every thing contained in it to the Judgement and Sentence of their own Reaſon, which is the true Form and Spirit of *Socinianiſm*, viſibly acting it ſelf with ſome more than ordinary Confidence. What is ſuited unto their Reaſon they will receive, and what is not ſo, let it be affirmed an hundred times in the Scripture, they will reject with the ſame Eaſe and Confidence as if they were *Imaginations* of Men like themſelves. Both *Books* that are written unto this purpoſe, and the common *Diſcourſes* of many do fully teſtifie unto this Advance of the *Pride* of the Minds of Men. And he is careleſs about theſe things who ſeeth not, that the next Stage is down-right *Atheiſme*. This is that

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Dunghill which ſuch blazing Exhalations of Pride do at laſt fall into. And herein do many countenance themſelves with a falſe and fooliſh Pretence, that all thoſe whom they differ from are *fanatical* Enemies of Reaſon, when they aſcribe unto it all that any man in his Wits can ſo doe, who believeth Divine Revelations, and doth not abſolutely diſavow the *corruption* of the Nature by the Fall.

2. The *Poyſon* of theſe Principles is greatly diffuſed in the World. For hence it is that all thoſe Doctrines of the Goſpel which have any thing of *ſpiritual Myſtery* in them, which are conſtituent Principles of, or do any way belong unto the *Covenant of Grace*, and ſo not abſolutely reconcileable unto Reaſon as Corrupt and Carnal, are by many ſo laden with Contempt and Scorn, that it is ſufficient to expoſe any man unto the Contumelies of *Ignorant*, *Irrational* and *Fooliſh*, who dares to avow them. Such are the Doctrines of *Eternal Predeſtination*, of the *total Corruption of the Nature of Man* as unto Spiritual things by the Fall, of the *Power* and *Efficacy of the Grace of God* in the Converſion of Sinners, of the *Nature* and *Neceſſity* of *Regeneration*, of *Union* with Chriſt, of *Juſtifica-*

Juſtification by the Imputation of his *Righteouſneſs*, of the Nature of Internal Inherent Righteouſneſs or *Evangelical Holineſs*, of the Neceſſity of continual Supplies of the Spirit in *actual Grace* unto all Duties of Obedience, of the *Power of the Holy Ghoſt* evidencing the Divine Authority of the *Scriptures* in and by themſelves, with ſundry others. Many can ſee no *Reaſon* for the admittance of theſe things, or they cannot ſee the Reaſon of them; and therefore although they are fully and plainly declared in the Scriptures, yet are they (by no ſmall Generation among us) ſo derided and exploded, as that the very Names of them are grown into Contempt. But why all this *Scorn*, all this Severity? Men may do well to conſider, that not long ſince all the *Prelates of England* owned thoſe Doctrines as *Articles of Faith* which now they ſo deride. And although they are not obliged by any Divine Precept to be of the ſame Judgement with them becauſe it was *theirs*, yet it may be they are under ſome Obligation from the *Laws of the Land* not to Renounce the Ancient Doctrines of the Church, and are certainly bound by the Laws of Chriſtian Modeſty and Sobriety, not to vilifie and ſcorn the Doctrines they owned,

owned, and all that do profeſs them.

But it is Warrant ſufficient unto ſome for the utmoſt Deteſtation of any Principles in Religion, that they have a ſeeming *incomplyance* with their *Reaſon*, though apparently corrupted by Prejudice, and weakened by Ignorance. Hence they will not admit that there can be a Conſiſtency between the *Unchangeableneſs* of Gods Decrees, and the *Freedom* of our Wills; That *Juſtification* by the Blood of Chriſt doth not render our own *Obedience* needleſs; That the *Efficacy* of Gods Grace and the *Neceſſity* of our Duty, are reconcileable. And herein they ſeem to take along with them as their Security theſe two Principles, ſeeing without them they have no Foundation to build upon.

(1) That *Reaſon* as it acts in them, is the ſame with *right Reaſon* in general, that whatever Reſpect is due to the one, is ſo to the other. It were well in the mean time, if Prejudices, corrupt Affections and groſs Ignorance did not on great variety of Occaſions manifeſt themſelves among this ſort of Perſons; and not onely ſo, but ſuch a courſe of Converſation among ſome of them, as none can think conſiſtent with the *Divine Teachings* who Believe the Scriptures.

tures. But it is ſo come to paſs, that all that Humility, Meekneſs, Self-diffidence, all that Conſcientious Fear of ſinning and Practice of Holineſs, which the Word of God makes ſo neceſſary unto them who would learn *the Truth as it is in Jeſus*, are by many (puffed up with a Conceit of their own Ability to know all things) utterly diſregarded.

(2) That there is no Time nor Inſtance wherein thoſe thoughts which ſeem to us moſt *Rational*, are to be captivated unto the Obedience of Faith. And yet without this there is no true Knowledge of the Mind of God in the Goſpel to be attained. What ſuch Principles will carry men out unto in Religion were eaſie to *conjecture*, if Experience did not render *conjecture* hopeleſs in this caſe.

Wherefore, this Pride of the Minds of Men refuſing to bow or ſubject themſelves unto the *Authority of Divine Revelation*, deſigning to exalt Self in its *Intellectual* and *Moral* Abilities, in its Powers to know what it ſhould, and do what it ought, hath in all Ages been a great Principle of Oppoſition unto, and Apoſtaſie from *Evangelical* Truth. Nor was it ever more Rampant than in the Dayes wherein we live.

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For beſides that it hath openly ſpawned that whole brood of Errors which ſome entire Sects do eſpouſe, it diffuſeth it ſelf in its Effects among all ſorts of Profeſſors of Chriſtianity. An *humble ſubjection* of Mind and Conſcience unto the *Authority* of God in his Word, which alone upon trial will be found to anſwer the Experience of Believers, is the onely ſecurity againſt this Diſtemper. This we may, this we ought to pray for, not onely for our ſelves, but that it might be given of God unto them who ſcarce Believe that God gives any thing that is *ſpiritual* and *ſupernatural* unto the *S*ouls of men in any ſuch way, as that the Effect ſhould depend on the Efficiency of Grace, and not on their own Wills.

Unto this *Pride*, as inſeparable from it, we may adjoyn that *Vanity and Curioſity* that are in the Minds of men. Theſe are thoſe which the Apoſtle marketh under the outward *S*ign and Effect of them, namely, *itching Ears*; 2 *Tim.* 4. 3. For hence an Inclination and hearkening of Mind after things *novel*, *vain* and *curious*, doth ariſe. Under the power of thoſe Affections men *cannot endure ſound Doctrine*, nor will abide in the *S*implicity of the Goſpel. They know

know not how to be *wiſe unto Sobriety*, and to keep their Speculations about *ſpiritual* things within the bounds of ſober Modeſty. But they are ſtill *intruding themſelves* into things they have not ſeen, being *vainly puffed up in their own fleſhly Minds*, *Col.* 2. 18. And as this *Curioſity* hath produced many of theſe needleſs vain Opinions, ſubtle, nice, philoſophical Diſputations and Diſtinctions, wherewith ſome have filled Religion, ſo from the uncured *vanity* of Mind doth proceed that Levity and Inconſtancy which are in many, whereby they are *toſſed to and fro with every wind of Doctrine* that blows upon them from the cunning Sleights of men who lye in wait to deceive. Unto all we may adde, that *carnal Pride* and Ambition (where the outward Affairs of the Church or the Profeſſion of Religion are accompanyed with ſuch *S*ecular Advantages of Wealth, Honour and Rule as to ſtirr up Envy and Emulation among men of Earthly Minds,) which as they have occaſioned many ſcandalous Outrages in Religion, ſo they have been the Riſe and Occaſion of many *Hereſies* alſo.

IV. *Careleſs Security and groundleſs Confidences* do betray men into Apoſtaſies from

the Goſpel, when unexpected Trials do befall them. To give Evidence hereunto we may do well to conſider the things that enſue.

1. The Holy Spirit hath ſufficiently warned us all, that Defections and Backſlidings from the Truth would fall out among the Profeſſors of it. This hath been already abundantly manifeſted in the *expreſs Inſtances* of ſuch *Warnings* and Predictions before produced and inſiſted on. And there is in the Word a vehement Application made of all theſe Warnings unto us and our Duties. Thence are thoſe *Exhortations* and *Precepts* multiplyed, to *Watch*, to *ſtand faſt* in *the Faith*, to *be ſtrong* and *quit our ſelves like men* in this matter. Nothing but a *Diligent Attendance unto all Goſpel Duties, and a vigorous acting of all Goſpel Graces*, will preſerve us, if the Scripture may be believed. And as for thoſe by whom theſe things are deſpiſed it is no matter at all what Religion they are of.

2. We are foretold and forewarned of the great *Danger* that will attend the Profeſſors of the Goſpel when ſuch a *ſeaſon of Apoſtaſie* ſhall by any means come upon them. So prevalent ſhall the means of it be, as that *many ſhall be deceived*, and if it were poſſible

poſſible *even the Elect* themſelves; *Math.* 24. 10, 24. *S*uch a *S*eaſon is an *hour of Temptation that cometh on the World to trye them that dwell upon the Earth*, *Rev.* 3. 10. And the woſull Event in them that ſhall be overtaken with the Power of it, in their utter and eternal Deſtruction, is in many Inſtances ſet before us.

3. It is alſo plainly intimated, that *ſuch a ſeaſon* of the Prevalency of a Defection from the Truth ſhall be a time of *Great Security* among the Generality of profeſſed Chriſtians. Churches ſhall be aſleep, Perſons ſhall cry *Peace*, *Peace*, when that Day cometh as a ſnare.

We are not therefore left without *ſufficient Warning* in this Caſe, both of the *certainty* of our Trial, the *greatneſs* of our Concernment, and the *danger* of *S*ecurity. And yet notwithſtanding all theſe Means of Excitation unto a *vigorous Attendance* unto our Condition, Danger and Duty, it is evident unto every diſcerning Eye, how deſperately *ſecure* are the Generality of Profeſſors of the Goſpel with reſpect unto this Evil and the Conſequents of it. Nothing can *awake* them unto the Conſideration of their own ſtate, although their *Neighbours houſes* are ſet on fire from Hell.

Love of the World with Proſperity and Eaſe on the one hand, or the Cares and Buſineſſes of it on the other, do ſo take up the Minds of men that they are not ſenſible of any Concernment in theſe things. And we may briefly conſider the various wayes whereby this *ſecurity* puts forth its Efficacy in diſpoſing men unto Apoſtaſie when they they ſhall fall into the Occaſions of it.

(1) It doth ſo by *poſſeſſing* and *overpowring* them with a proud, careleſs, ſupine *Negligence*. Men hear of this Evil and the Danger of it, but (like *Gallio*) they *care for none of theſe things*. They know not of any Concernment they have in them, nor of any Need they have to provide againſt them. Unto ſome others perhaps theſe things may belong, but unto them not at all. Thoſe who would preſs them on their Minds and Conſciences, they look on as Perſons cauſeleſly importunate, or troubled with groundleſs Suſpitions and Fears. If there be any *danger about Religion*, they doubt not but ſooner or later Proviſion will be made againſt it by *Law*. But as unto any eſpecial Duty incumbent on themſelves with reſpect unto their own Souls, they know nothing of it, nor will conſider it.

it. Had not the World been aſleep in this *ſecurity*, had not men been utterly regardleſs of their Intereſt in the Truth, it had not been poſſible that Religion ſhould have been ſo totally corrupted as it was in the *Papacy*, and yet ſo few take any notice thereof. At ſome *Seaſons* God raiſed up among them *Witneſſes of the Truth*, who not only declared and profeſſed it, but alſo ſealed their Confeſſion with their Blood. But the Generality of *Chriſtians* were ſo far from being excited thereby to the Conſideration of their own Concerns and Duty, as that they oppoſed and *perſecuted* them unto Deſtruction, as the Diſturbers of the *publick Tranquillity*. And it is no otherwiſe at this Day. Many complain, more fear a Defection from the Goſpel. It is alſo evident in how many things the *Doctrine* of it is already by ſome *corrupted*, by whom it was formerly *profeſſed*. Inſtances of as great Apoſtaſies as the Name of *Chriſtianity* is capable of, are multiplyed among us: And yet how few are there that do at all *regard* theſe things, or once conſider what is either their Duty or their Danger in ſuch a ſeaſon!

(2) It worketh and is effectual by a *wicked Indifference* as unto all things in *Reli-*

gion. Men under the Power of this *Security* neither ſee nor will underſtand, nor can be made ſenſible of the difference that is between *Truth* and *Error*, *Piety* and *Superſtition*, ſo as to value one more than another. It is all *Religion*, and it is no more but ſo. If Perſons change from *one Way* to another, ſo as they do not utterly renounce *Jeſus Chriſt*, they may be ſaved in the way they betake themſelves unto. The Profeſſion of ſuch Perſons attends on all Occaſions, and an *Apoſtaſie* from the Myſteries of the Goſpel will be but an uſefull complyance with Opportunity.

We judge no Men, nō Party of Men as to their Eternal State and Condition upon the account of their *outward Profeſſion* in Religion, unleſs they are open *Idolaters* or *flagitious* in their Lives. God onely knows how it is between him and their Souls. The framing of Churches (as the *Church of Rome*,) according unto mens Minds, Fancies, Opinions or Intereſts, and then *confining Salvation* unto them, is an Effect of Pride and Folly, as contradictory to the Goſpel as any thing that can be imagined. But yet there is a wide Difference to be made between *Apoſtates* and others. Better men had *never known the way of Righteouſ-*

neſs,

neſs, than after they have known it, to turn aſide from the holy Commandement. Thoſe who have been inſtructed in the Truth of the Goſpel and made Profeſſion of it, are for the moſt part acted by ſuch *depraved Principles*, moved by ſuch *corrupt Luſts*, and do ſhew ſo much *Ingratitude* againſt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in their Defection, *denying the Lord that bought them*, that they put a peculiar Character and Mark upon themſelves. And although we will not *judge* any, yet is it our Duty to put men in Remembrance of the Danger that attends ſuch Apoſtaſies. So the Apoſtle expreſſely tells the *Galatians*, that upon their admittance of *Legal Ceremonies*, and falling from the Grace of the Goſpel in that one point of *Juſtification*, that *Chriſt ſhould profit them nothing*, or they ſhould have no Benefit by what they yet retained of the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, *Chap.* 5. 2, 3, 4, 5. And as to thoſe who are carryed away by the ſtrong Deluſions of the grand Apoſtaſie foretold, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. he ſayes plainly, *that they ſhall be damned, ver.* 12. As *Peter* alſo affirms, that thoſe who introduce *damnable Hereſies do bring on themſelves and thoſe that follow their pernicious wayes, ſwift deſtruction*; 2 *Pet.* 2. 1, 2. So little Coun-

tenance doth the Scripture give unto this Effect of curſed *Security*.

(3) It likewiſe worketh by *vain Confidences*. Moſt men think with *Peter*, and on no better Grounds than he did, (nor ſo good nether, as not being conſcious unto themſelves of ſo much ſincerity as he was,) that *though all men ſhould forſake* the Truth and Purity of Religion, yet they will not do ſo. But they underſtand not at all what it is to be preſerved in an Hour of Temptation, nor what is required thereunto. They *ſcorn* to fall away, and yet they *ſcorn all the Means* whereby they may be preſerved from ſo doing. Tell them that they ſtand in need of the *Power of God* for their Preſervation, of the *Interceſſion* of *Chriſt*, of the *conſtant Supplyes* of the *Spirit*, of an *Experience* of the Goodneſs and Efficacy of the Truth, with the Benefits which their own Souls have received thereby, and that for this End they are to *watch*, *pray*, and *live* in a conſtant Attendance unto all Evangelical Dutyes; and they deſpiſe them all through their *Pride*, or neglect them through their *ſpiritual Sloth* that they are given up unto. Such perſons as theſe, if they meet with any thing that *mates their Confidence*, fall at once under the Power

of

of the next Temptation they are assaulted withall. Wherefore, whereas the Generality of professed Christians are influenced one way or other by this *wofull Security*, it is no wonder if they are surprized and hurried away from their Profession by *Seducers*, or that they will be easily carryed down the stream when they fall into a general Inclination unto a Defection.

V. *Love of this present World and the perishing Satisfactions of it*, betrayes innumerable Souls into frequent Apostasies from the Gospel. So the Apostle assures us in the Instance of *Demas*; 2 *Tim.* 4.10. *Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present World.* And as he forsook the Apostle, so also the work of the *Ministry*, and it may be *Christianity* therewithall. I shall not insist on that *Love of the World* which works by *Covetousness* in the course of Mens Lives, though this be a Means also disposing them unto Apostasie. For our Saviour affirms, that the *Seed which falls among Thorns is choaked*; The Word which is received by Men whose Hearts are filled with the Cares of this present World never comes to the Perfection of Fruit-bearing. I shall onely make mention of *two Seasons* wherein the Predominancy of this Love in the Hearts

of

of men, multiplies Apoſtates from the Truth.

The firſt is that of *Perſecution*, wherein the Profeſſors compared by our Saviour unto the *ſtony ground* do preſently fall away. Such perſons, ſaith he, *have no root in themſelves*, but *during for a while, when Tribulation or Perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the Word, they are offended*; *Matth.* 13. 20, 21. The firſt thing that *Perſecution* attacques the Minds of men withall is their *ſecular Intereſts* in this World; their Wealth, their Houſes, Lands and Poſſeſſions are put into hazard by it. Willing it may be this ſort of men are to *follow* Chriſt for a while with the *Young Man in the Goſpel*; but when they hear that all they have will be hazarded, it may be muſt be parted withall, they goe away *ſorrowfull*. Sorry they are for a while to leave that Word or Doctrine which before they had received with *Joy*; as *Matth.* 13. 20. But ſorrowfull as they are, Love of the World overcomes all other Conſiderations, and away they goe. What *Multitudes* ſuch ſeaſons have driven from the Truth; what Starrs they have caſt down from the Heaven, no Nation hath had greater Experience than our own in the dayes of *Queen Mary*; I pray God

God it never meet with another Trial, and alſo hope that it is not likely ſo to doe.

The other Seaſon where Love of the World gives up Men unto this *fatal Evil*, is, when and where *Superſtition* and *Error* are Enthroned. We may look into ſome foreign Nations where the Goſpel had once taken great place, eſpecially a great part of the *Nobles* were Obedient unto the Faith. But the Supreme Power of the Nations abiding in the hands of thoſe of the *Roman Profeſſion*, and therewith the Diſpoſal of Authority, Riches, and Honour, thoſe vain Bubbles of the World, and Idols of corrupted Minds, it is known what Influence it hath had upon the Profeſſion of Religion; moſt of the Poſterity of thoſe great and truely Noble Perſons which once profeſſed the *Proteſtant* Religion being in moſt places fallen back into the Old Apoſtaſie. For their Minds being filled with the *Love of this World*, and precipitated by Ambition into a fierce purſuit of their Deſires, finding the way to worldly Honour and Wealth ſhut up unto all that would ſtedfaſtly adhere unto the Truth, they have generally ſacrificed their Convictions, Conſciences and Souls unto this predomi-

predominant Luſt. And ſuch a Seaſon as this, is more to be feared than *Perſecution* it ſelf. Many have a generous Stoutneſs not to be violently forced out of their Perſwaſion and Profeſſion. But when theſe curſed Baits are laid before men with various pretences to ſtifle their Conſciences, and Advantages to keep up their Reputation, there is no ſetting up a Damm againſt the Torrent of their *Love of this World*. The Warmth of the Sun cauſed him to *caſt away his Garment*, which the Bluſtering of the Wind did but *wrap cloſer about him*. The Rayes of Power in Honours and Favours have made more caſt away their Religion in the Neighbouring Nations, than Perſecutors ever could doe. Whileſt therefore the *World* is enthroned in the Minds of Men, whileſt it is made their *Idol*, whileſt Hopes of Advance, and Fears of Loſs, are the principal Affections whereby their Courſe of Life is ſteered, Profeſſion of the Truth ſtands upon very uncertain and tickliſh terms. And therefore whileſt we ſee that the Minds of Multitudes are under the Power of this *Luſt*, all the Security can be had of their continuance in the Profeſſion of the Truth, is their not being lead into either of the Temptations mentioned.

I ſhall not inſiſt on other depraved Affections of the Minds of Men. The Truth is, there is no one prevalent Luſt, no one predominant Sin, no Spiritual or Moral Diſorder indulged unto, but it diſpoſeth the Soul firſt unto an *under-valuation*, and then a *Relinquiſhment* of the Truth, as Occaſions are offered.

VI. *The hand of Sathan is in this matter.* He was the Head of the firſt Apoſtaſie from God. Having himſelf fallen away from that Place and Order in the *Obediential* part of the Creation wherein he was made, the firſt work he engaged in, (and he did it effectually,) was to *draw Mankind* into the Guilt of the ſame Crime and Rebellion. And ever ſince the Revelation of the Means of *Recovery* for Man, (from which he was juſtly excluded) he hath purſued the ſame deſign towards all unto whom that way of Recovery is propoſed: Thus he quickly carryed away the *whole Old World* upon the matter into *Idolatry*. And ever ſince God hath been pleaſed to make known the way of Life and Salvation by *Jeſus Chriſt*, his two great Deſigns and Works in the World have been, to keep men off from Receiving the Goſpel, and to turn them aſide who have Received it.

The

The firſt he managed two wayes; Firſt by ſtirring up *raging bloody Perſecutions* againſt them that profeſſed it, to deterre others from engaging into the like way: And the other by *Blinding the Eyes of Men*, and filling them with Prejudices againſt the Truth; as the Apoſtle declares, 2 *Cor.* 4. 4. By what Wayes and Means in particular he carryed on this firſt Deſign in both parts of it, belongs not unto our preſent Enquiry. Failing herein, his principal Deſign in the World hath been, and continueth yet to be, the *corrupting* of the Minds of men about the Truth, and drawing them off from it in part or in whole, ſo the Apoſtle intimated; 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. *I fear leaſt by any means as the Serpent beguiled Eve by his Subtilty, ſo your Minds ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt.* It was the *Serpent* by whom *Eve* was beguiled, but who is it the Apoſtle is jealous that the *Corinthians* might have their Minds corrupted by from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt; that is, by falſe Doctrine, or as it were *another Goſpel*, as he ſpeaks, *ver.* 4? It was the ſame *Serpent* by himſelf and in his *Agents*, as he expreſſeth it *ver.* 14, 15. And he compareth his Attempt to draw off Profeſſors from the Goſpel, unto his

Attempt

Attempt on *Eve*, whereby he began the Apoſtaſie from God in the ſtate of Nature. The Tenure of the Covenant was propoſed unto our firſt Parents in the Prohibition of *Eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and the *Threatning* annexed thereunto. And he beguiled *Eve* by Corrupting the *Threatning* by his falſe Interpretation of it, whereby he corrupted her Mind. The Tenure of the Covenant of Grace is propoſed unto us principally in the *Promiſes* of the Goſpel, which are the Center of the whole Doctrine of it. Theſe therefore he endeavours by all Means to pervert, in Oppoſition unto the Wiſdom and Grace of God in them. Hereby he hopes to draw off Men from the *Simplicity that is in Chriſt*, or the plain Declaration of the Will of God in the Goſpel, unto falſe and fooliſh Imaginations of his own ſuggeſtion. And what an hand he was to have in the great *Apoſtaſie*, the Apoſtle foretells; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 9, 11. There was to be the *working of Sathan* in it, and *ſtrong* or effectual *Deluſions unto the belief of Lyes*, which are all from him who is the Father of them. So Men departed from the *Faith* by *giving heed to ſeducing Spirits*; 1 *Tim.* 4. 1. that is, the Devil and his Agents. It would

would be too long a Digreſſion to engage into a particular Enquiry, How, by what Wayes and Means, Sathan prevails with men to turn them off from the Truth, and turn them unto Fables. How he blinds their Minds, how he enflames their Luſts, how he preſents Occaſions, how he ſuggeſts Temptations with falſe and corrupt Reaſonings, what Colours and Pretences he puts upon his Deſigns when he transforms himſelf *into an Angel of Light*, with what Power Signs and lying Wonders he gives Countenance to his Deluſions, how he works on the Minds of *Seducers*, how on the Minds of them that are to be *ſeduced*, how he ſtirres up Perſecution againſt the Truth and its Profeſſion; would require a Diſcourſe *fully* to declare longer than the whole of this is deſigned to be. It may ſuffice to know, that he is not *weary* nor *wanting* unto any of thoſe manifold Advantages which are adminiſtred unto him. He is at work in all places at this day, in ſome making Havock of the Churches, in others by various Wiles and Artifices filling the Minds of men with Prejudices againſt the Truth, and turning them from it.

Laſtly, *God* doth not look on all theſe things

things as an *unconcerned Spectator*. He indeed is not *tempted with Evil*; He *Tempteth none*, he ſeduceth none, but he rules them all, and over-rules all Events unto his own Glory. He will not ſuffer men firſt to undervalue and deſpiſe, and then to *reject* and *forſake* the chiefeſt of his Mercies, ſuch as his *Word* and *Truth* are, without reflecting on them with ſome Acts of his ſeverity. Wherefore, when men from the corrupt Principles mentioned, ſeduced by the Luſts of their own Hearts, and entangled by the Deceits of Sathan, do relinquiſh the Truth; God in his holy righteous Judgement gives them up unto *farther Deluſions*, ſo that they ſhall compleat their Apoſtaſie, and grow obſtinate therein unto their Deſtruction. When a People, a Nation, a Church, or private Perſons have received the Goſpel and the Profeſſion thereof, not walking anſwerably thereunto; God may forſake them, and withdraw from them the Means of their Edification and Preſervation. The *Rule* of his Continuance with any People or Church as to the outward Diſpenſation of his Providence and the Means of Grace, is that expreſſed, 2 *Chron.* 15. 2. *The Lord is with ye while ye be with him, and if ye ſeek him he*

will be found of you, but if you forſake Him he will forſake You. He *judicially* forſakes them by whom he is *wilfully* forſaken.

God may be forſaken by men in *one* way, and he may Righteouſly forſake them in *another:* For inſtance; Under the Profeſſion of the Truth men may give up themſelves unto all *Ungodlineſs* and *Unrighteouſneſs*, unto a flagitious courſe of Life in all Abominations; ſo holding the Truth captive in Unrighteouſneſs. In this Caſe God oft-times in a way of *Puniſhment* gives men up unto an Apoſtaſie from the Truth which they have profeſſed, to ſhew that he will not alwayes have it proſtituted unto the Luſts of men. So the Apoſtle ſpeaks expreſſely; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10, 11, 12. Although *they received the Truth* in the Profeſſion of it, yet they *loved it not*, they yielded not Obedience unto it, but *took pleaſure in Sin*; therefore God ordered things ſo, that they ſhould *reject the Truth it ſelf alſo*, and Believe Lyes unto their own Deſtruction. Herein at this day lyes the danger of a total and ruinous Apoſtaſie. Multitudes, the Generality of all ſorts, the Body of the People do yet aſſent unto and profeſs the Truth; But alas! what are the *Lives* and *Converſations* of many under that Profeſſion?

on? How do all manner of Sins abound among us? The Profeſſion of the Truth by *not a few* is the greateſt Diſhonour and Diſparagement that can be caſt upon it. The beſt Service many can doe it, is by *forſaking* it, and declaring that the Belief of it is inconſiſtent with their curſed wicked Lives. And may we not juſtly fear, leſt ſuch perſons ſhould ſpeedily be given up by one Means or other to *ſtrong Deluſions* to Believe a Lye unto their juſt Damnation. And on the other hand alſo, God ſometimes gives men up to *Sins and wickedneſſes in Practice*, becauſe of the Rejection of the Truth which they have received: So he dealt with them who liked not *thoſe Notions* of Truth which they had concerning Him, his Being, and his Providence, from the Light of Nature, *Rom.* 1. 28. And ſo he uſually deals with all Apoſtates. If they *will* forſake the Truth, they *ſhall* forſake Righteouſneſs and Holineſs which are the proper Fruits of it, and be given up unto all abominable Luſts and Practices.

We may therefore enquire by what Wayes and Means God doth ſo puniſh and revenge the Beginnings of *Wilful Apoſtaſie* from the Goſpel, ſo that Men ſhall

compleat them and prove obſtinate in them, unto their Eternal Deſtruction. And this he doth,

Firſt, By *removing his Candleſtick* from among them. This the Lord Jeſus threatens his backſliding Church withall; *Rev.* 2. 5. God will by one Means or another deprive them of the Light and Means of the Knowledge of the Truth, that Ignorance and Darkneſs ſhall cover them, and irreſiſtably encreaſe upon them. Some of the Inſtruments of Light it may be ſhall be taken away by Death, and ſome ſhall lye under Prejudices, the Gifts of the Spirit ſhall be reſtrained or with-held from others, that they ſhall have *Darkneſs* for *Viſion*, and the *Sword of the Lord ſhall be upon their right Eye that it ſhall be quite dryed up.* In this Condition of things the Minds of Apoſtates already bent upon Backſliding, are by their Ignorance and Darkneſs more and more filled with Prejudices againſt the Truth, and alienated from it. For as they loſe the Knowledge and Faith of any part of Truth, their Minds are poſſeſſed with what is oppoſite thereunto.

Secondly; In this Condition God *ſends them ſtrong Deluſions* that they may *believe a Lye*; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 11. God is, as it were, now

now reſolved on the End of theſe Perſons, what they have righteouſly deſerved. And therefore he makes uſe of any Means as it is meerly *pœnal* to bring them thereunto. And as by the former Act of his Diſpleaſure he took from them the Knowledge of his Truth, ſo by this he gives them up irrecoverably to adhere unto a Lye, they ſhall not onely *profeſs* it, but *believe* it, which is the cruelleſt Slavery the Mind of Man is capable of. Now Gods ſending of men *ſtrong Deluſions that they may believe a Lye*, conſiſts in theſe things.

(1) *Delivering* them up to the *Power* of *Sathan*. He is the grand Seducer, the Deluder of the Souls of men, the firſt Author of Lying, whoſe principal Deſign it is to win over the Faith and Aſſent of men thereunto. This work he ſtands continually ready for, but that God is pleaſed to *limit*, *bound* and *reſtrain* him with reſpect unto thoſe who are yet under his eſpecial Care; But as to theſe *Apoſtates*, God breaks down all his Fences about them, and by his efficacious Permiſſion ſuffers Sathan to act his part to the utmoſt, for their Deluſion. This was the ſtate of things under the *Papal Apoſtaſie*; wherein Sathan had deluded men, (as it ſhould ſeem) to

the Satisfaction of his utmoſt Malice. And to ſhew how Abſolute he was in his Succeſs, he did as it were *make Sport* with the deluded Souls of Men. There was nothing ſo *fooliſh* and *ſottiſh* that he did not impoſe on their Credulity. Many *Volumes* will not contain the Stories of thoſe *ridiculous Follies* which he hath ſo impoſed on the Minds of poor deluded Mortals, wherein he ſeemed to ſport himſelf in the Miſery of blinded Mankind. God grant that he never receive a Commiſſion to act the ſame part among us, whoſe ſins ſeem to cry aloud for it; and Men live as if they longed to be again given up to the Power of the Devil.

(2) By ſuffering *Seducers* and *falſe Teachers* to come among a People, with ſuch advantagious outward Circumſtances as ſhall further their Succeſs. Theſe *Seducers* prepare themſelves for their work by their own Inclinations and the Suggeſtions of Sathan. But God for the Executing of his juſt Diſpleaſure, will by his Providence put *Advantages* into their hands, of prevailing over the Minds of men. So the chief Seducers in the World at this day, namely, the *Pope* and thoſe Acting with or under him, have poſſeſſed

that

that Place, and obtained that *Reputation* among men, as gives them oft-times an uncontroulable Succeſſe in their Work. Did men ſtand upon even Ground with them who were in the Profeſſion of the Truth, ſhould any ſo come unto them to perſwade them unto the Errors, Superſtitions and Idolatry of the *Papacy*, they could not but deſpiſe their offer. But theſe Men having once gotten the Name of the *Temple of God*, and ſhewing themſelves to the People in the ſtead and place of God, what could they not draw and *ſeduce* them unto? Neither is their Superſtition or Profeſſion continued on any other Grounds on the Minds of the Multitude, but onely by that *Power* over the Conſciences of Men, which *Names*, *Titles*, and the Places they ſeem to poſſeſs in the Church, do give unto them. Then therefore doth God give up men to Deluſions, when in his Providence he affords ſuch *Advantages* unto them by whom they are to be deluded. For thoſe who poſſeſs the places of *outward Veneration* may lead a backſliding Multitude into what they pleaſe.

Laſtly, God doth *judicially* ſmite ſuch Perſons with *Blindneſs of Mind* and *Hard-*

neſs of Heart, that they ſhall *not ſee, nor perceive, nor underſtand*, even when the Means of Light and Truth are propoſed unto them. This Effect of Gods Severity is declared; *Iſa.* 6. 9, 10, 11; and Application is made of it unto the *Jews* under the Miniſtry of our *Saviour* himſelf; *Joh.* 12. 40, 41. and that of the *Apoſtles*; *Act.* 28. 29; and is expounded *Rom.* 11. 8. When things are come to this Iſſue, when God *ſubducts* the Means of Grace from men in the *whole* or in *part*, or as unto their Efficacy, when he *permits* Sathan to deceive them by ſtrong Deluſions, and moreover himſelf *ſmites* them with Hardneſs of Heart and Blindneſs of Mind, then is the State of ſuch *Apoſtates* miſerable and irrecoverable. We are not therefore to think ſtrange, that the Light of the Goſpel diffuſes it ſelf no more in the World, that ſo Eminent *a ſtop* is put unto its Progreſs; God hath put an End unto his Gracious dealings with ſome kinds of *Apoſtates*, and they are reſerved for another Diſpenſation of his Providence.

Theſe are ſome of the general Principles of that *Defection* which is in the World from the Myſtery and Truth of the

the Gospel, with the Reasons and Causes of them, unto which more (I doubt not) of the like Nature may be added.

But there is moreover a particular Consideration to be had of those *especial Truths* which any turn away from, and the Imaginations they fall into, whereof the especial Grounds and Reasons, superadded unto these we have considered, as equally respecting every kind of Defection from the Gospel, are also to be enquired into, and it shall be done in *one Instance* among our selves.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Inſtance of a peculiar Defection from the Truth of the Goſpel, with the Reaſons of it.

BEſides the Reaſons inſiſted on, which have a general Influence into all *Apoſtaſies* from the Doctrine or Myſtery of the Goſpel, each eſpecial *Defection* in every kind, hath Reaſons and Cauſes peculiarly ſuited unto its Riſe and Furtherance. There are indeed not a few who forſake the Truth which they have profeſſed, merely on the Impreſſions of outward Circumſtances, in the encouraging Examples of ſome who go before them in the ſame Paths, from whom they expect Advantage. And every Age giveth us in one place or another *renewed Evidence*, that where either *ſecular* Intereſt, or Wearineſs of the Truth, through the Love of the preſent World, and Hatred of Holineſs, or ſtrict Evangelical Obedience, do give a Pro-

Propenſity unto a Declenſion from any Doctrines of the Goſpel, unto Perſons whoſe *Grandeur* and outward Advantages are ſufficient to attract a Complyance from the Minds of men under the Power of Ambition, or any importunate deſire of Earthly things, that *Multitudes* of all ſorts ſuppoſe there is nothing left for them but to croud who ſhall come neareſt the Leaders in the Apoſtaſie. And it is not ſeldom that meeting with new Temptations they *out-run* both them and themſelves alſo, into ſuch Extreams as at firſt they deſigned not. For hence it is, that ſo many do even at preſent iſſue their Receſſions from the Truth under the Conduct of thoſe *Ignes fatui* or Erratick Exhalations of Countenance and Favour, in the undeſigned Boggs of *Popery* on the one hand, or *Socinianiſm* on the other. But I ſhall not at preſent take them into further Conſideration, nor indeed are they worthy of any at all, whoſe Minds are viſibly byaſſed in the Profeſſion of things *ſpiritual* and *heavenly*, with thoſe that are *earthy* and *carnal*.

They are of another ſort from whom we may take an Inſtance of the eſpecial Reaſons of a *peculiar Defection* from the Goſpel. For it is manifeſt how ſome among

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our ſelves are fallen off from the whole Myſtery of it, with reſpect unto the *Perſon* and *Grace* of Chriſt, the *Satisfaction for Sin* made by his Death, the *Attonement* by the Blood of his Sacrifice, *Juſtification* by his Righteouſneſs, and *Sanctification* by his Spirit. If any ſhall think themſelves unduely charged herein, they may be pleaſed to know, that none are intended but thoſe who are really *guilty*. Whoever owns the Things mentioned, though he will cauſeleſſely make uſe of peculiar words of his own for their Expreſſion, neither *Scriptural* nor *proper*, nor ſuch as Believers have in former Ages been accuſtomed unto, yet whileſt the things themſelves are *believed* and *received*, at preſent we lay nothing to his charge. But, unleſs to ſecure a groundleſs, uſeleſs, irrational Charity, we wilfully ſhut our Eyes and ſtop our Ears, we cannot avoid the Evidence that theſe things are by many even totally renounced. Yea and this is done by them to the greateſt diſadvantage of themſelves, and diſhonour of the Truth that can be well imagined. For their Profeſſion is, that they have tryed Chriſt and the Goſpel in theſe things, and find there is Nothing in them for which they ſhould *abide* in the Faith of them, or place their Confidence in them.

I hope none of them have gone unto that Length as to caſt themſelves under the dreadfull Doom in the Apoſtolical paſſage inſiſted on; but that their Condition is dangerous, cannot be denyed. To prevent the like *ſtate* in our ſelves and others, we may do well to conſider, What are the true, real, next and immediate *Springs* and *Reaſons* of ſuch Mens Apoſtaſie from the Myſtery of the Goſpel, as added unto the General Reaſon of all Apoſtaſie of this kind before mentioned. For ſo it is, that beſides thoſe General Reaſons and Cauſes, which have their Efficacy and Influence in all Apoſtaſies, and muſt alwayes be conſidered in this matter; there are alſo Reaſons that are peculiar unto every eſpecial Inſtance of Backſliding in any kind.

Firſt, *Ignorance* of the *Neceſſity* of *Jeſus Chriſt* and the Benefits of his *Mediation* unto Life and Salvation, hath betrayd them firſt into an *Indifferency* about them, and then a *Defection* from them. They want a *true* and in their own Souls a *full* Conviction of their *perſonal* want of theſe things. Such Apoſtates ariſe out of *looſe Notional Profeſſors*, who never had any ſound Convictions of the want of Chriſt; like them,

Act.

Act. 2. 37. or him, *Act.* 16. 30. And although they lived, ſome of them, a long time in the *outward Profeſſion* that ſuch a Conviction of the *worth* and *uſe* of Chriſt and his Grace was *neceſſary* unto them that would be ſaved; yet dare they not own that ever themſelves had any ſuch Conviction. For if they had, why do they now forſake him as unto thoſe Ends for which they were convinced he was ſo to be deſired? That Faith alone will never forſake Chriſt, which ſprings out of, or is built on a Conviction of the want of Him. They who are well and in health will not alwayes eſteem the *Phyſician*.

Unto this *Conviction* of the want of Chriſt two things are required in all men, according to the meaſure of the *Light* which they have received.

(1) The *Knowledge* of the *Nature*, *Guilt*, *Filth*, and *Deſert* of *Sin*. For he came to ſave us from our Sin. And no man will look after him to be delivered from he knows not what; or look to the *Brazen Serpent*, who is not ſtung. Few have any Knowledge hereof but what they cannot avoid, and fewer are *ſenſible* of theſe things in a due manner. The great deſign of Sathan at this day in the World is, to *extenuate*,

nuate Sin in Opinion, and ſo *countenance* it in Practice. Indeed it ever was ſo; but it is in a peculiar manner at preſent *viſible* and *open*, though the Conſpiracy be ſo ſtrong, that a publick Reſiſtance unto it is ſcarcely maintainable. His Aym in it is and ever was, to take off from the *Neceſſity* and *Uſefulneſs* of Chriſt and his Grace, againſt which his Malice is principally bent. And when once he can convey away the *Relief*, he will be ready enough to aggravate the *Evil*.* Hence are thoſe Opinions ſo diligently advanced and greedily embraced, againſt the *Guilt* and *Power* of *Original Sin*, and the *Depravation* of our *Natures*, wherein men of all ſorts conſpire. Whatever ſome men may deſign, his End in them all is no other but to prevent a *Conviction* of the want we have of Chriſt. So alſo are Sins in *practice* extenuated, *ſpiritual* Sins againſt the *Goſpel* are made nothing of, yea laughed at; and *Immoralities* againſt the Law are lightly eſteemed, and eaſily paſſed over. To take off at preſent a *ſenſe* of the want of Chriſt, and to make way for future Apoſtaſie, is the End of theſe and the like corrupt Opinions. Accordingly it is come to paſs in the World. Never was there leſs Regard of the *Perſon* and

and *Offices* of Chriſt, of his Grace, and Benefits of his *Mediation*, among them that are called Chriſtians, than is found among many at this Day. Unleſs God graciouſly relieve, the World is like to loſe Chriſt out of the Goſpel, as to the true Glory of his *Perſon*, and Uſe of his *Mediation*. Thus was it with the Generality of them concerning whom we ſpeak, they never had a thorow *practical Conviction* of the want of Chriſt; for if they had, they would not ſo ſhamefully have left him as they have done. The general Notions they had hereof, ſerve onely to entitle them unto a *Defection*. I know theſe things are deſpiſed by many, unto whom the *want* of Chriſt, and the *receiving* of him, or an *Intereſt* in him, are contemptible things. But that is all one; we muſt not foregoe the Goſpel, with our own Experience, and ruine our Souls, to eſcape their Reproaches. Sin will be Sin, and Chriſt will be Chriſt, and Salvation by him will be what it is, when they have done what they can.

(2) Hereunto is required a *knowledge* and *ſence* of the *Weakneſs* of the Beſt of our *Duties*, and their utter *Inſufficiency* to abide the *Trial* in the ſight of God. Without the former we cannot *have*, and without

out the latter we can never *abide* in a Senſe of the want of Chriſt. A right Conſideration of the *Inſtability* of our Minds in them, the *weak Actings* of Grace for the moſt part, the *Wearineſs* of the Fleſh that accompanyes them, ſecret *Impreſſions* from Self and inward *Oppoſitions* from Sin that attend them, with the Greatneſs and *Holineſs* of God with whom we have to doe in them, is indiſpenſibly neceſſary to keep the Lord Chriſt and his Grace alwayes *deſireable* unto us. Want hereof makes ſome dream of a *Perfection* in themſelves, and others of a *Juſtification* by their own Obedience; The firſt tending to the Contempt, the latter unto the Neglect of Chriſt and his Grace. This is the beginning of Tranſgreſſion unto many Apoſtates. They never had a *due ſenſe of the want of Chriſt*, either as to their Deliverance from the Guilt of Sin, or as to the procuring of a Righteouſneſs wherewith they might appear in the preſence of God. This are they to enquire after, who ſhall endeavour their Recovery. To contend with them about their own Imaginations, is for the moſt part *endleſs* and *fruitleſs*. Let it be inquired, whether they ever had any *Conviction* of the want of Chriſt for the Pardon of Sin,

or for the obtaining of Life and Salvation? If they ſhall grant they had, it may be asked, why they do not make uſe of him unto the *Ends* with reſpect whereunto they were convinced of the *want of him?* and if they do ſo, we have no Conteſt with them in this matter. If they acknowledge that they never had any ſuch *Conviction*, this is that which we are to confirm, That ſuch a *Conviction of the want of Chriſt*, is indiſpenſibly neceſſary unto the Salvation of all that are Adult. And herein we have the Teſtimony (upon the matter) of the whole Scripture, the Law and the Goſpel, to confirm the Truth we contend for. Want therefore hereof was one Spring of this *Defection*. For, thoſe who have owned the *Neceſſity* of him, or an *Intereſt* in him, for the *Ends* mentioned; and afterwards declare, that there is nothing of *Goodneſs* or *Truth* in what they have found and diſcovered, for which they ſhould continue ſo to doe, their Profeſſion is, That they have *conſidered* this matter, *known* it, and do *condemn* it; wherein the formal Nature of *Apoſtaſie* doth conſiſt. And all thoſe Diſciples which they draw after them, they doe it, by hiding from them or drawing them off from any ſenſe of a want of *Chriſt*,

Chriſt, or of his *Mediation*. That which is the Foundation of our Profeſſion in Oppoſition hereunto, which we lay the weight of all our Eternal Concerns upon, is, That without Chriſt, before we receive him as ſet forth by God to be a *Propitiation thorough Faith in his Blood*, we are in a loſt, undone, and accurſed Condition; that our *cloſing* with him, our *believing* in him, is upon a Conviction of our *want of him* for Life, Righteouſneſs and Acceptation with God, both before and after Believing. And it is in vain for Sathan himſelf to attempt the *Faith of Gods Elect* herein. A concurrence of plain Revelation and evident Experience is invincible. But he who never knew, who never was made deeply ſenſible of the want of an *Intereſt in Chriſt*, will never perſevere in the purſuit of it, nor abide in what he hath attained when attacqued by any Vigorous Temptation.

Secondly, Want of a *ſpiritual View* of the *Excellency* of Chriſt both in his *Perſon* and *Offices*, is another Spring and Cauſe of this Declenſion from the Faith of the Goſpel. This View of him in Types, Shadows and Promiſes, was the Life of the Faith of the Saints under the Old Teſta-

ment. Herein *Abraham ſaw his day and rejoyced*, *Joh.* 8. 5, 6. So *Cant.* 2. 8, 17. And it is mentioned as their chiefeſt Priviledge, *Iſa.* 33. 17. Theſe things they *diligently inquired into*, 1 *Pet.* 1. 11. and *longed after*, deſiring (if it were poſſible) to *ſee them*, *Matth.* 13. 17. For the Glory and Life of all Religion, of all Entercourſe with God, lay in them from the giving of the firſt Promiſe. Chriſt was *all and in all* unto them no leſs than unto us. Take a Reſpect unto Him and his Offices out of the Old Adminiſtrations, and they are things of no value or ſignification. And it was better for them who were enquiring after Chriſt diligently under dark Types and Shadows, than it will be for thoſe among us who ſhut their Eyes at the glorious Light of the Goſpel. And the Reaſon why he was rejected by the *Jews* at his Coming, (for *he came unto his own*, *and his own received him not*, *Joh.* 1. 11.) was, becauſe they could *ſee neither Form*, *nor Comelineſs*, *nor Beauty in him*, *why he ſhould be deſired*, *Iſa.* 53. 2. None can or will abide conſtant in his *Doctrine* who are not able *ſpiritually* to diſcern the Glory of his *Perſon* and *Offices*. Hence the Apoſtles lay it down as the Foundation of their Faith; that *they beheld his Glory*, *the*

the Glory as of the onely Begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth, Joh. 1. 14. And that which they had in themſelves they endeavoured to communicate unto others, that they *alſo might believe through their Word, and have fellowſhip with Him, 1 Joh.* 1. 3. So he himſelf makes this the Foundation of his Church, the Rock upon which he will build it. For on the Confeſſion of *Peter*, that he was *the Chriſt, the Son of the Living God*, (which expreſſeth the Glory both of his *Perſon* as the Son of the Living God, and of his *Offices* as the Chriſt,) he ſayes, *On this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*; *Matth.* 16. 16, 18. Whoever builds not hereon, builds on the *ſand*, and will be prevailed againſt. So our Apoſtle declares, that thoſe that *hold him not as the Head*, will be *beguiled*, and *vainly puffed up in their fleſhly minds*, falling into fooliſh Errors, and vain Curioſities; *Col.* 2. 18, 19. And he reſts the whole Foundation of all Goſpel Faith in this Glory of his *Perſon* and *Offices*; *Heb.* 1. 2, 3. *Coloſſ.* 1. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20. It is this Knowledge of Him alone, that will make us diſeſteem and deſpiſe all other things in compariſon of Him; *Phil.* 3. 8, 10.

Wherefore, a ſpiritual *view of him*, an *Acquaintance* with him, as the *Brightneſſe of the Glory of the Father*, and the *expreſſe Image of his Perſon*, as he in whom all the Perfections of the Divine Nature, as Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Grace, do center, as to their Manifeſtation, even in the *Union* of his Natures, the *Glory* of his Offices, the *ſuitableneſs* of his *Perſon* and Grace unto all the Wants and Deſires of the Souls of Men, is indiſpenſibly neceſſary unto our Preſervation from Apoſtaſie. And I could eaſily manifeſt by particular Inſtances, that a failing herein hath had a principal and prevalent Influence into all the Apoſtaſies that have been in the Chriſtian World, both as unto *Faith* and *Worſhip*. It is, though a *new*, yet a moſt *wicked* Attempt that Sathan is making by ſome againſt the whole of our Religion, whileſt allowing his *Perſon* to be what it is, (which for ſecular Ends they dare not deny,) they endeavour to render him of little or no uſe in our Profeſſion. This is to fight neither againſt ſmall nor great, but againſt the *King of Iſrael*. And if ſuch ſerpentine Attempts be not prevented, the *publick Profeſſion* of Religion among us will iſſue in *Atheiſm*, or ſomewhat of a near Alliance thereunto.

Thus

Thus it ſeems to be with ſome of them of whom we ſpeak. They had among other Notional Profeſſors, an *hiſtorical* Knowledge of Chriſt, and thereof made Profeſſion; but they were never *ſpiritually* acquainted with the glorious *Excellencies* of his Perſon and Offices. For if they had, they would not have forſaken the *great Myſtery of Godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh*, for other uncouth Notions of their own. Who can think it poſſible, that any one who hath known the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, the Lord of Glory, the *Son of God Incarnate*, receiving our Nature into an Hypoſtatical Union with himſelf, and a bleſſed Subſiſtence in his own Perſon, as propoſed unto us in the Goſpel, as evidently therein Crucified before our Eyes, as the *Apoſtle and High-Prieſt of our Profeſſion*, as our *Advocate* with the Father, as making Peace for us and Reconciliation through the Blood of his Croſs, as made of God unto us *Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption*; who ever had Experience or Benefit in their Temptations and Trials of his Love, Care, Tenderneſs, Compaſſion, Readineſs and Ability to ſuccour them that *come to God by him*; can Renounce all theſe things, to betake themſelves to vain No-

tions of a *Light* and *Perfection* of their *own* in their ſtead. I hope they are few who do ſo *practically*, but the Expreſſions of many have a dangerous Aſpect that way. And it is certain, there is nothing more neceſſary unto all that are called Chriſtians, than to have clear diſtinct Notions in themſelves of the Perſon of *Chriſt*, and plainly to declare, How they place their whole Faith, Hope and Truſt in Him. And for ſuch as really do ſo, though not able to expreſs themſelves in a due Manner, yea though unduely captivated unto ſome novel Conceptions and Expreſſions, the Good Lord pardon them, and let Mercy and Peace be on them, and on the whole *Iſrael* of God. Whereas therefore ſome who have made a Profeſſion of theſe things, do now Relinquiſh them, I ſhall pray they may take heed that they do not thereby *crucifie the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame.* Neither is it a *verbal* Acknowledgement in owning that Chriſt which ſuffered at *Jeruſalem*, which will free any from this Charge and Guilt. Unleſs the Lord Chriſt, that Chriſt which is *God* and *Man* in one Perſon, be owned, received, believed in, loved, truſted unto, and obeyed in all things, as he is propoſed unto us

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in the Scripture, and with reſpect unto all the Ends of Righteouſneſs, Holineſs, Life and Salvation, for which he is ſo propoſed, he is *renounced* and forſaken. Who can ſufficiently expreſs the cunning Sleights of Sathan? who can ſufficiently bewail the Fooliſhneſs of the Hearts of Men, that after they have (at leaſt Doctrinally) known, and profeſſed theſe things, they ſhould be turned aſide from the Glory, Truth, and Holineſs of them? Let Chriſtians therefore know and beware, that if they find any Decay in Faith, Love, Delight, and Truſt in the *Perſon* and *Mediation* of Chriſt, they are in the way that leads to ſome curſed Apoſtaſie of one kind or another.

But where the *Divine Perſon* of Chriſt is denyed, or all Acquaintance with him is deſpiſed; where the Communication of *Grace* from him unto Believers is ſcorned, where no uſe by Faith of his *Love*, *Care*, *Compaſſion* and *Power* as our High-Prieſt and Advocate with the Father in our Duties, Sins, Temptations, and Sufferings, is allowed; we need not repreſent the danger of falling into *Apoſtaſie*, ſuch Perſons are already in the depth of it. I ſpeak this with the more Earneſtneſs, becauſe, of all the Evils which I have ſeen in the Courſe

of

of my Pilgrimage, (now haſtning unto its Period) there hath been none more grievous than the publick Contempt I have lived to ſee caſt on the *Perſon* of Chriſt, as to its Concernment in our Religion, and the Benefits we receive from him. But God taketh care of theſe things.

Thirdly, Want of *Experience* of the *Power* and *Efficacy* of the *Spirit* and *Grace* of *Chriſt*, of his Life and Death for the *Mortification* of Sin, hath been another Spring of this Apoſtaſie. How it is wrought by theſe Means, and can be no otherwiſe accompliſhed, I have ſhewed elſewhere at large, and muſt not here aſſume the ſame Argument again. Onely two things may be obſerved concerning this Work and Duty. As,

(1) It is that wherein, or whereunto the greateſt *Wiſdom* and *Exerciſe* of *Faith* doth conſiſt, or is required. It is a matter purely *Evangelical* to derive Strength and Ability from Chriſt for the *Mortification* of Sin, by vertue of his Death, in a way of Believing. Unenlightened Reaſon can neither ſee nor underſtand any thing of this matter, yea it is *fooliſhneſs* unto it, as are all other Myſteries of the Goſpel. There is not any other way for the ſame End, which

which it will not more willingly embrace.

(2) It is a Work and Duty whereunto there is a great *Reluctancy in the Flesh*, in corrupted Nature. There is nothing it had rather be freed from, and that whether we respect the *inward Nature* of it, or the *constant Continuance* in it that is required of us. Yet is it such, as that without it we can never attain Life and Salvation; *for if we by the Spirit do mortifie the deeds of the Flesh, we shall live*, and not otherwise. Wherefore, when men once begin to be sensible of the powerfull inward Workings of Sin, they will take one of these two wayes, nor can they do otherwise. For either they will *yield* themselves up *Servants unto Sin*, and make *provision for the Flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof*, according as they are able, and as far as consists with their Secular Interest, as doe the most; or they will betake themselves to some Way or other for its *Restraint* and *Mortification*, either in *part* or in *whole*. And here many things will present themselves unto such persons, some (it may be) of their own Devising, and some of Gods Appointment, but for *other Ends* than what they apply them unto. Hence Multitudes faint in this Work,

Work, and at length utterly give it over. They begin in the *Spirit*, and end in the *Fleſh*. For not *ſtriving lawfully*, nor in the right Way, Sin gets ground and ſtrength againſt them, and they yield up themſelves to the Service of it. Hence have we ſo many, who having under their Convictions contended againſt their Luſts in their *Youth*, do give up themſelves unto them in their *Age*. But ſo it is in this matter, that thoſe who through their *Unbelief* cannot ariſe or attain unto an Experience of the Power and Efficacy of the Grace of Chriſt for the *Mortification* of Sin, will betake themſelves to ſomewhat elſe for their Relief. And this is that principally which hath brought forth that *Light within* among ſome, which muſt doe all this work for them, and much more. If any will betake themſelves thereunto, they ſhall find that Remedy againſt Sin, and that Perfection of Holineſs in a *few dayes*, which they had been looking for from Chriſt a *long ſeaſon* to no purpoſe. So would they have us to think, who it may be never had Experience what it is to derive ſpiritual Strength from Chriſt, or to wait on him for it; onely they have been wearied by the ſucceſſeleſneſs of their Convictions, and the

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burdenſomeneſs of Lifeleſs Duties. For ſome of them were for a Seaſon not onely *ſober* in their Converſation (which I hope they yet continue to be,) but *diligent* in Duties of Religion. But finding neither *life*, *power*, nor *ſucceſs* in them, through their own uncured Unbelief, they ſeem to have grown weary of them. For nothing is more grievous than the *outward Form* of ſpiritual Duties, where there is no Experience of *inward Power* and Sweetneſs. Wherefore, the corrupt Minds of men will be ready to relinquiſh them, for any thing that pretends a better Relief.

What was the Reaſon that ſo many in the *Papacy* betook themſelves to *Penances*, ſevere *Diſciplines* and *Self-macerations*, for the Relief of their Conſciences with reſpect unto the *Mortification* of *Sin*? It all ſprang from this Root, or Ignorance of the Power and Efficacy of the *Spirit* and *Grace* of Chriſt for that End. Somewhat muſt be done unto this purpoſe, and not knowing the right Way and Goſpel-Method of it, they betook themſelves unto what they could invent, or what was impoſed on them by the Superſtition of others, that pretended to afford them a Relief. Somewhat hereof thoſe among us ſeemed for a while

while to make an Appearance of, in an *outward* Gravity, and ſeeming Auſterity of Life; but the Things themſelves they had no mind unto, as not complyant with other Intereſts they had to purſue. But the *Light within* ſhall do all of this Kind for them; wherefore, in compariſon thereof, and as unto this End at leaſt, they reject the Lord Chriſt, and do what in them lyes to *put him to open ſhame*. For what do they leſs, who declare, that that is done in a *few dayes* for them by *another Means*, which could not be effected *by the Faith which for ſo long a ſeaſon* they profeſſed in him? But the Cauſe of the whole lyes ſolely in their own *Ignorance*, and want of *Experience* of the things which themſelves profeſſed.

Fourthly, *Ignorance of the Righteouſneſs of God*, hath been another Spring of this Apoſtaſie. This the Apoſtle expreſſely declares to be the Reaſon why men *goe about to eſtabliſh a Righteouſneſs of their own*; *Rom.* 4. 3. *Being ignorant of the Righteouſneſs of God, and going about to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs, they have not ſubmitted unto the Righteouſneſs of God*. And this he ſpeaks of the *Jews*, and that the Beſt of them, who followed after Righteouſneſs,

and

and *ſought* it, as *it were by the works of the Law*; *Rom.* 9. 31, 32. Of all men they thought themſelves moſt Knowing of the *Righteouſneſs* of God, for they made *their boaſt of God, and knew* (as they thought and profeſſed) *his Will, and approved the things that are more excellent, being inſtructed out of the Law, and were confident that they themſelves were Guides of the Blind, and the Light of them that are in Darkneſs, Inſtructers of the Fooliſh, and Teachers of Babes, having the Form of Knowledge, and of the Truth in the Law*; *Rom.* 2. 17, 18, 19, 20. Yet theſe men *ſubmitted not* to the *Righteouſneſs* of God, but went about to *eſtabliſh* their own *Righteouſneſs*, becauſe they were ignorant of the Righteouſneſs of God. And whereſoever this Ignorance is, men will doe ſo.

Take the *Righteouſneſs* of God in any ſence wherein it is mentioned in the Scripture, and this Event will follow upon the Ignorance thereof. For it muſt be either the Righteouſneſs that is *in him*, or the Righteouſneſs he requires *of us* in the Law, or the Righteouſneſs he hath provided *for us* in the Goſpel. Conſider it any of theſe wayes, and the Ignorance of it is that which countenanceth men in betaking them-

themſelves unto a Righteouſneſs of their *own*, yea, unavoidably caſteth them upon it. For,

(1) A right underſtanding of the *infinite Purity*, the glorious *Eſſential Holineſs* of the *Nature* of God, of his abſolute *Eternal Righteouſneſs*, as the Lord and Judge of all; will teach men what Apprehenſions they ought to have of any thing done *in* them or *by* them. *Our God is a conſuming Fire*, *Heb.* 12. 29. *A God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*, *Hab.* 1. 13. *Who will in no wiſe acquit the guilty*, *Exod.* 34. 7. Whoſe *judgement* it is, that *they who commit ſin are worthy of Death*, *Rom.* 1. 32. *An Holy God*, *a Jealous God*, *that will not forgive Tranſgreſſions and Sins*, *Joſh.* 24. 19. Whileſt the Dread and Terror of the Excellency of this Holineſs and Righteouſneſs is before men, they will not eaſily betake themſelves and their Truſt unto a Righteouſneſs of their own. There are two ſorts of Perſons that the Scripture repreſents under an Apprehenſion of this Righteouſneſs of God. The firſt are *convinced guilty Sinners*, and the other *humble holy Believers*: And what thoughts of themſelves each ſort is thereon filled withall, it doth declare. For the former ſort, we have an Inſtance in *Adam*,

Gen.

Gen. 3. 10. In *others*, *Isa.* 33. 14. as alſo, *Micah* 6. 7. The ſumme is, they can think of nothing, have no other Conceptions in their Minds, but how either they may *flye* from him, and *hide* themſelves; or feign to themſelves impoſſible wayes of *Attonement*; or be ſwallowed up in Horror and Deſpair. Send them in this Condition unto a Righteouſneſs of their own, and they will eaſily underſtand you do but reproach their Miſery. And for the other ſort or *humble holy Believers*, we may ſee alſo how on this Occaſion they expreſs themſelves in this matter; *Joh* 4. 17, 18, 19. *Chap.* 9. 2. *Pſal.* 130. 3. *Pſal.* 143. 6. They all joyntly acknowledge, that ſuch is the glorious Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of God, ſuch the Imperfection of our Righteouſneſs and Impurity of our Works, that there is no appearance or ſtanding before him on their Account. It is the want of a due Meditation hereof, that hath produced the many preſumptuous Opinions in the World concerning the *Juſtification* of Sinners. The Scripture ſpeaking of Juſtification, directs us to conceive *it in the ſight of God*, *Pſal.* 130. 2. or *before him*, *Rom.* 3. 20. Teaching us, that in this matter we ſhould ſet our ſelves as in the preſence and under the

Eye of this Holy God, and then conſider on what *Ground* we may *ſtand* before him. But where men are *ignorant of this Righteouſneſs of God*, when they have ſecret thoughts that he is *altogether ſuch an one as themſelves* as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks; that is, one who is either not ſo Holy in himſelf as is pretended, or one who doth not require a *ſuitableneſs* in us unto his Holineſs, but is little concerned in our Duties, leſs in our Sins; is it any wonder if men think they can of themſelves do that which is Satisfactory unto him, and ſo *goe about to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs?* And this way even in *Teaching* have ſome betaken themſelves unto. They endeavour to ſatisfie their Diſciples, that there is no ſuch *ſeverity* in God againſt *Sin* as ſome pretend, no ſuch *Holineſs* in his Nature as neceſſarily to inferre an Indignation againſt every Sin; that they are but *vain frights* and needleſs Diſquietments which either their own Conſciences or the Preaching of ſome men do put them unto. And if they can prevail to be credited herein, there is no doubt but that thoſe whom they ſo perſwade will be pleaſed with their own Righteouſneſs; but whether God in this matter of *Juſtification* will be pleaſed with it or no, is not ſo eaſie to be determined.

And

And hence it is, that all Opinions of a *Self-righteouſneſs* or *Juſtification by Works*, have alwayes produced *Licentiouſneſs* of *Life*, though they who aſſert it clamorouſly pretend to the contrary. So when a Righteouſneſs of *Works* was abſolutely enthroned in the *Papacy* before the Reformation, the Lives of the generality of men were flagitiouſly Wicked, and moſt of the *good works* that were performed amongſt them, were but *Barterings* with God and Conſcience for horrible Vices and Impietyes. According alſo unto the growth of the ſame Opinion in its various degrees among us, is the Progreſs alſo of all ſorts of Impiety and Licentiouſneſs of Life. And if the Maſters of theſe Opinions would but open their Eyes, they would ſee, that whereas they aſſert their *Juſtification by Works* under a pretence of a Neceſſity ſo to doe, for the Maintenance of Holineſs and Righteouſneſs among men, that Unholineſs, Unrighteouſneſs, Intemperance of Life, and all Abominations do grow upon them, ſuch as were not heard of in former dayes among them who made any Profeſſion of Religion. And the Reaſon hereof is, becauſe the very ſame Notions of God which will allow men to ſuppoſe that they may be

juſtified in his ſight by their own Duties, will alſo accommodate their Luſts with ſeveral Apprehenſions that he will not be ſo *ſevere* againſt their Sins as is ſuppoſed. However this is plain in matter of Fact, that the Opinion of *Self-righteouſneſs* and *Looſeneſs* of Converſation in the practice of Sin, have gone together generally, from the dayes of the *Phariſees* to this preſent ſeaſon. And as this proud Conceit receives daily Advancement in ſeveral Degrees, under various Pretences, it is to be feared the World will be more and more filled with the bitter Fruits thereof. It is *Grace* and the *Doctrine* of it, as well as its *Power*, that muſt put a ſtop to Sin. He that drives men into a Righteouſneſs of their *own* at one door, opens another unto their Sins. And all that we have got hitherto by fierce Diſputations about *Juſtification* as it were by *Works*, is only that the Faith of ſome hath been weakened, the Peace of Multitudes diſquieted, Differences encreaſed, without the leaſt Evidence of Holineſs improved, or the Vices of men reformed by them. And it will not be granted, that the ſtricteſt Profeſſors in theſe dayes, (whether they have imbibed theſe Opinions or no,) do in real Holineſs and Fruitfulneſs of Life exceed

ceed thoſe of the fore-going Age, who firmly and without Heſitation truſted unto the Lord Chriſt alone, for Life, Righteouſneſs and Salvation.

(2.) Suppoſe the *Righteouſneſs* God *requires of us in the Law*, to *be intended*; the Ignorance thereof alſo is a great Reaſon why men venture on a *Righteouſneſs* of their own, and go about to eſtabliſh it. Were they indeed acquainted with the *purity*, *ſpirituality*, *ſeverity*, and *inexorableneſs* of the *Law*, they would never be poſſeſſed with Imaginations that the *Perfection* which they dream of in themſelves, would endure its Trial. But when men ſhall ſuppoſe that the Law reſpects onely *outward* Duties, and thoſe alſo of the greateſt Notoriety as to *Sin* and *Obedience*, and can relieve themſelves in ſundry things by *phariſaical* Diſtinctions and Expoſitions of it, when they conſider not, or underſtand not the extent of it unto an exacting of the entire *Image* of God in us wherein we were created, unto the regulating all the Frames, Figments and firſt Motions of the Heart, and its Application of the *Curſe* unto the leaſt Deviation from it; they may pleaſe or ſome way ſatisfie themſelves *by eſtabliſhing a Righteouſneſs of their own*, as

it were *by the Works of the Law.*

But, (3) The *Righteouſneſs of God* in this place is taken principally for that *Righteouſneſs* which he hath *provided for us* in the Goſpel. And what this is, the Apoſtle declares in the next Verſe; *For* (ſays he) *Chriſt is the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs unto every one that believeth*, ver. 4. And this he calls the *Righteouſneſs which is of Faith*, Chap. 9. ver. 30. Wherefore, the Righteouſneſs of God is Chriſt as fulfilling the Law, and anſwering the End of it, received by Faith. This is that *Righteouſneſs of God*, which whoſoever are ignorant of, and ſubmit not unto, they will go about to eſtabliſh a Righteouſneſs of their own, and truſt unto it. And thus hath it openly and viſibly fallen out with them concerning whom we treat. They will not deny but that under their *Convictions* they were ſolicitous after a Righteouſneſs with which God might be well pleaſed. And if they ſhould deny it, they were not to be believed; becauſe it is impoſſible it ſhould be otherwiſe with any in that Condition: For *Conviction* is principally a ſenſe of the want of a *Righteouſneſs*. In this ſtate the Goſpel which they had, and which it may be they heard preached,

preſented

preſented unto them *Chriſt as the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs unto them that do believe*; as it is fully declared; *Rom.* 3. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25; with Chap. 5. 18, 19. This divers of them for a ſeaſon profeſſed themſelves to embrace and acquieſce in. But when things came to the Trial, it generally appeared that they had all along been Ignorant of this *Righteouſneſs of God*; for they have left it for a Righteouſneſs of their *own*, which had they truely and really known it, they could not have done. He who hath ever truely and really made Chriſt the End of the Law for *Righteouſneſs* unto himſelf by Believing, will not caſt Contempt and Scorn upon his Righteouſneſs imputed unto us, as it is the manner of ſome to doe. But herein is the Son of God in ſome meaſure *crucified afreſh, and put unto open ſhame.* When men ſhall profeſs that they did look after Righteouſneſs by him, and would have received him as the End of the Law for Righteouſneſs, but not finding that therein which they expected, they have betaken themſelves to a Righteouſneſs wholly *within* them, and ſo *wholly* their own; they will not eaſily contrive a way whereby they may reflect more Diſhonour upon him. Whatever pretences

may be made to the contrary, whatever Maze of words any may lead men into, and tire them withall, whatever Revilings and Reproaching of others they may compaſs them with, they cannot but know in their own Conſciences that it is thus with them; notwithſtanding any Profeſſion that they ever made, they never did come nor ever could attain unto a real Knowledge of and Acquaintance with this *Righteouſneſs of God*, ſo as to receive it by Faith, and obtain thereby reſt unto their Souls. And thence it is that as unto Profeſſion at leaſt, they have betaken themſelves unto an Endeavour *to eſtabliſh their own Righteouſneſs*, which if it produce and effect a real holy Converſation and Righteouſneſs in them of any long continuance, they are the firſt in whom it ever had that Effect in this World, and will be the laſt in whom it ſhall find that Succeſs.

Fifthly, Want of Submiſſion unto the *Sovereignty* of God, hath contributed unto the furtherance of this Evil. The *Sovereignty* of God acting it ſelf in infinite Wiſdom and Grace, is the ſole Foundation of the Covenant of Grace, and runs through the whole Myſtery of the Goſpel. Thence proceeded the *Incarnation* of the Son of God,

God, and his being filled with all Grace to be a Saviour; *Joh.* 3. 16. *Col.* 1. 19. *Joh.* 1. 16. Other Account thereof none can be given. Thence was his Subſtitution as the Surety of the Covenant in our ſtead, to undergoe the puniſhment due to our Sins, *Iſa.* 53. 6, 10. 2 *Cor.* 5. 21. Eternal *Election* flows from thence, and is regulated thereby; *Rom.* 9. 11, 18. So doth Effectual *Vocation*; *Matth.* 11. 25, 26. and *Juſtification* by Faith, *Rom.* 3. 30. The like may be ſaid of all other Myſteries of the Goſpel. Love, Grace, Goodneſs, diſpenſed in a way of *ſovereign* unaccountable Pleaſure, are in them all propoſed as the Objects of our Faith. The *carnal Mind* is pleaſed with nothing of all this, but riſeth up in Oppoſition unto every Inſtance of it. It will not bear that the Will, Wiſdom and Pleaſure of God, ſhould be ſubmitted unto and adored in the Paths which it cannot trace. Hence the Incarnation and Croſs of the Son of God are *fooliſhneſs* unto it, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23, 24, 25. The Decrees of God as to *Election* and *Reprobation*, unjuſt and unequal, overthrowing all Religion; *Rom.* 9. 17, 18, 19, 20, 21. *Juſtification* through the Imputation of the *Righteouſneſs* of Chriſt, that which everts the Law, and renders all

all our own Righteouſneſs unneceſſary. So in the whole Myſtery, in all the Doctrine, Precepts, or Promiſes of the Goſpel, that ſpring from or are reſolved into the *Sovereignty* of God, the *carnal Mind* riſeth up in Oppoſition unto them all. For whereas the formal Nature of Faith conſiſteth in *giving Glory to God* by Believing the things that are *above* Reaſon as it is *ours*, and *againſt* it as *carnal*, *Rom.* 4. 18, 19, 20, 21. this ſets up an *Enmity* unto it in all things. It is therefore alwayes tumultuating againſt the Myſteries of the Goſpel, and if it once come to make it ſelf the Judge of them, taking Aid from ſenſual Affections, and the vain Imaginations of the Mind, it will make Havock of all the Articles of Faith. And thus it ſeems to have fallen out in this Matter. Thoſe concerning whom we treat, ſeem to have caſt off a due Regard unto the *Sovereignty* of God, becauſe themſelves were never bowed by Faith ſavingly thereto. Wherefore in an Oppoſition unto it, they have ſet up their *Light within* as the Rule, Meaſure and Judge of the Truths and Doctrines of the Goſpel. In ſtead of *becoming Fools* by a Reſignation of their Reaſon and Wiſdom to the *Sovereignty* of God, that ſo they might in the Iſſue be really

Wiſe,

Wiſe, they have become *wiſe* in their own Conceit, and have waxed vain in their *fooliſh Imaginations*. Neither indeed is there any broader way of Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel, than a Rejection of Gods *Sovereignty* in all things concerning the Revelation of Himſelf and our Obedience, with a Refuſal to bring into Captivity every Thought unto the *Obedience of Faith*, which firſt brought forth *Pelagianiſme*, and of late *Socinianiſme*, as hath been ſhewed, from which two the whole of the preſent *Defection* is derived.

Sixthly, We may adde hereunto, as another Spring of this *partial Apoſtaſie*, want of an Evidence in themſelves of the *Divine Authority* of the *Scriptures*. It is not enough to eſtabliſh any man in the Profeſſion of the Goſpel, to own in general that the Scripture is the *Word of God*, or a *Divine Revelation* of his Will. He that hath not an Experience of a *Divine Authority* in it upon his own Soul and Conſcience, will not be ſteadfaſt when his Trial ſhall come. God looks with regard unto them alone *who tremble at his Word*, as owning his preſent Authority in it. Where this doth not abide upon them, *unlearned and unſtable men* (as the Apoſtle ſpeaks,) will be bold

to

to wreſt the Scriptures to their deſtruction, or to preferre other things before them, or at leaſt to equalize them with them. It is not therefore enough that we aſſent unto the *Truth* of the Word of God, unleſs alſo we are ſenſible of its *Power*, and of that Claim which it makes in the *Name of God*, of the abſolute *Subjection* of our whole Souls and Conſciences unto it. Now this Evidence in themſelves of this preſent *Divine Authority*, differing it unconceivably from all other *real* or *pretended* Conveyances of Truth, theſe Perſons either never had, or have inſenſibly loſt, or caſt off openly the Yoke of God therein. Hereon every *Imagination* of their own, exalts it ſelf into an Equality of Right and Authority with it. The End of theſe things is, that God gives men up to *ſtrong Deluſions to believe a Lye*, becauſe they *received not*, or *retained not the Truth in the Love thereof*; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. And when once it comes unto this, it is the work of Sathan (which he eaſily accompliſheth,) both to ſuggeſt unto them endleſs *Deluſions*, and to render them ſo Obſtinate therein, as that they ſhall deſpiſe every thing that is tendred unto *Conviction*.

This is the firſt Way whereby men *fall*

away from the Goſpel, namely, from the *Myſtery* and *Doctrine* of it as it is the Object of our *Faith*; wherein they doe what in them lyes, *to crucifie the Son of God afreſh, and to put him unto open ſhame.*

CHAP. VIII.

Apoſtaſie from the Holineſs of the Goſpel; the Occaſion and Cauſe of it. Of that which is Gradual, on the pretence of ſomewhat elſe in its room.

THere is, Secondly, *a Falling away from the Goſpel, with reſpect unto the Holineſs of its Precepts*, which is to be the *Matter*, as they are the *Rule* of our Obedience. And this alſo is of a Nature no leſs *perilous*, and attended with Conſequents and Effects no leſs *dangerous* than the former, and doth no leſs than that expoſe the *Son of God to open ſhame.* Yea an *Apoſtaſie* from the *Holineſs of the Goſpel*, is on many Accounts more dreadfull and dangerous than a *partial* Apoſtaſie from its

Truth.

Truth. For as it is more *ſpreading* and *Catholick* than that is, and of leſs Obſervation or Eſteem, ſo it is uſually more *irrecoverable*, moſt men under it being greatly *hardened* through the *deceitfulneſs of Sin*. Beſides, *commonneſs* hath taken off the *ſenſe* of its Evil and Danger. If there be an *Error* broached againſt the *Doctrine* of the Goſpel, it is oddes but ſome or other will take Notice of it, Confute it, and warn all men of the Danger wherewith it is attended. But let the whole World (as it were) lye in Evil, let the generality of Mankind drown themſelves in Luſts and Pleaſures, let the Lives and Converſations of men be as contrary to the *Rule* of the Goſpel as Darkneſs is to Light, ſo they make no Diſorder in this or that Way of *outward Worſhip*, and be either good *Catholicks*, or good *Proteſtants*, or any thing elſe of that kind; he ſhall ſcarcely eſcape the Cenſure of *Peeviſhneſs* and *Severity* (it may be of *Self-conceitedneſs* and *Hipocriſie*) who ſhall reflect any great Blame on theſe things. And yet notwithſtanding this *Partiality* in Judgment or Practice, with reſpect unto theſe Evils, it is generally acknowledged that it is poſſible that men may pleaſe God and be accepted with him, notwithſtanding many

many Miſtakes, Errors, and Miſconceptions of their Minds about *ſpiritual things*; but that any one ſhould ever come unto the Enjoyment of Him, who Lives and Dyes *impenitently* in any Sin againſt the Rule and Tenor of that *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requireth, I know as yet none that pleadeth. For once to pretend that men may *live in*, and *habitually act* any known Sin, without ſtriving againſt it, labouring for Repentance, and endeavouring its Mortification, is all one as avowedly to attempt the overthrow of Chriſtian Religion. Wherefore, on theſe and ſundry other Conſiderations, this latter ſort of *Apoſtaſie* from the *Holineſs* of the Goſpel, is at leaſt as *perilous*, as much to be oppoſed, and contended againſt, as that which is from the *Myſtery* and *Doctrine* of it; and that whereof the Generality of men are more earneſtly to be warned, as the Evil whereunto they are more *obnoxious* than to the other. And we do conjoyn both theſe together, not onely as thoſe which are of the ſame tendency, and do alike both *ruine* the *Souls* of Men, and *put the Lord Chriſt to open ſhame*, but alſo as thoſe concerning which we are forewarned that they ſhall enter into and come in the World together

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in the *latter dayes*. And whatever ſence the *latter dayes* mentioned in the Scripture may be taken in, either thoſe of the *World* and of *Religion* in *general*, or of the *particular Churches* whereunto men may belong; they are unqueſtionably come upon us; whoſe Danger and Duty therefore is declared in theſe Pre-admonitions. Wherefore, of the firſt our Apoſtle ſpeaketh, 1 *Tim.* 4. 1. *The Spirit ſpeaketh expreſſely, that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the Faith, giving heed unto ſeducing Spirits and the Doctrines of Devils.* I doubt not but this Prediction had its ſignal Accompliſhment in the *Papacy*; and am well perſwaded, that the Holy Ghoſt had reſpect in particular unto thoſe Principles and Practices which a Learned Perſon of this Nation hath laid open under the Title of *The Apoſtacy of the latter times*. But we find alſo by wofull Experience, and that renewed almoſt every day, that it hath reſpect unto *us alſo* and the Times wherein we live.

The Entrance and Coming of that Kind of *Apoſtaſie* which we have now deſigned to treat of, is in like manner foretold, 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; The ſumme of what the Apoſtle there inſtructeth us, is, That in

theſe

theſe *latter times* under an *outward Profeſſion* of the *Goſpel* men ſhould give up themſelves unto the *purſuit* of the *vileſt Luſts*, and the *practice* of the moſt *abominable Sins*. And we fear this *prediction* is in like manner fulfilled.

Now although theſe things are Evil and Dangerous, both in their own *Nature* and *Tendency*, eſpecially as they come together and make their joynt Attempt againſt the *Honour* of Chriſt, and the *Salvation* of the Profeſſors of the Goſpel; yet this *Prediction* of them, and *Pre-admonition* concerning them may be of advantage unto them that are *ſincere* and *upright*, if duely improved.

For, (1) If this two-fold ruinous *Apoſtaſie* will and doth preſs upon Us, on whom theſe Ends of the World are come, we ought ſurely to *ſtand upon our Guard*, that we be not *ſurprized* with it, nor *overcome* by it. How ought *we to ſpend our Sojourning here in Fear?* It was the Advice of him whoſe Confidence had like to have been his Ruine. It is aſſuredly no time for any to be *careleſs* and *ſecure*, who deſign or ſo much as deſire to be preſerved from this *fatal Evil*. However we cannot any of us plead, that we were not warned of our *Danger*, nor called on for that Circumſpection and Watchfulneſs, that Care and

Diligence, that Earneſtneſs for *Divine Help* and Aſſiſtance, which our Condition requireth, and which will be a Means of *Deliverance* and *Safety*. And,

(2) Being found in the way of our own *Duty*, we need not be greatly *moved* or *ſhaken in our Minds* when we ſee theſe things come to paſs. It may be a Proſpect of the *State of Religion* at this day in the World, is ready to terrifie the Minds of ſome, at leaſt to fill them with amazement. For if things ſhould alwayes ſo proceed, they may be afraid leſt *Chriſtian Religion* ſhould at length loſe all its Beauty and Glory. But theſe things are all of them punctually foretold, whereby the Efficacy of the Temptation from their coming to paſs, is prevented. Yea conſidering that all our Faith is reſolved into the Scripture, and built on the Infallibility of its Propheſies and Predictions, ſeeing they are foretold, the Temptation would be accompanyed with more Vigour and Efficacy if we ſaw them not come to paſs, than it is now we doe; ſeeing it is evident from other Circumſtances, that we are fallen into the *latter dayes*, which the Accompliſhment of theſe Predictions renders unqueſtionable. See *Matth.* 24. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 24. *Acts* 20. 29,

20. 29, 30. 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 3. 1 *Tim.* 4. 3. 2 *Tim.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And the truth is, there was never any perſwaſion more pernicious befell the Minds of men, than that Churches, this or that Church, or any Church, are not, or is not lyable or obnoxious unto theſe Decayes, Declenſions and Apoſtaſies; or that any in them or of them can be preſerved from them, without the utmoſt Care and Diligence in attending unto the Means appointed for their Preſervation. When the *Jews* fell into ſuch a fooliſh Confidence with reſpect unto their *Temple* and Worſhip, God was wont to bid them goe to *Shilo*, and ſee what was become thereof; as aſſuring them that what fell out in one Time and Place, might doe ſo in another. And we know how it was in this matter with the firſt *Chriſtian Churches*, and how ſoon, (as hath been declared,) *Revel.* 2. 4, 5. *Chap.* 3. 1, 2, 3, 4; 14, 15, 16, 17. We may *goe to them* and learn how vain are all the Pretences of outward Priviledges and Exemptions; for aſſuredly, *unleſs we repent we ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

That therefore which we ſhall now enquire into, is, the *Nature*, the *Cauſes*, and *Occaſions* of that Apoſtaſie or falling off from the *Holineſs of the Goſpel* in Churches and

by particular perſons, which is thus foretold to fall out in the *latter dayes*, and hath done ſo accordingly. And we ſhall have reſpect herein both unto that *general Apoſtaſie* of this kind which fell out in former Ages under the Conduct of the *Roman Church* principally, and that alſo which by various Wayes and Means is at preſent prevailing in the World. And ſome things muſt be premiſed unto our Conſideration hereof.

1. The Doctrine of the *Goſpel* is a *Doctrine of Holineſs*. This it teacheth, requireth and commandeth. This the *Myſteries* and *Grace* of it lead unto; this the *Precepts* of it require, and this the great *Example* of its *Author* propoſed in it unto us, doth enjoyn. And it doth not this as that which is *convenient* for us, or ſome way or other *neceſſary* unto us, but as that without which we can have no Intereſt in any of its *Promiſes*. No *unholy Perſon* hath any ground to expect the leaſt Advantage by the Goſpel here or hereafter. When all things come to their iſſue, and ſhall fall under Eternal Judgment according to the Goſpel, all other Pleas and Pretences will utterly and for ever fail them who are *Workers of Iniquity*, *Matth.* 7. 22, 23.

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2. The *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requireth is an *Obedience* of another *Nature* and *Kind* than what is required by any other Doctrine or way of Inſtruction. The *Law of Nature* continueth to ſuggeſt unto us many important Duties towards God, our ſelves, and other men. The *written Law* is an exact Repreſentation of all thoſe *Moral Duties* which were required of us in the ſtate wherein we were created. But there is an *Holineſs* required by the Goſpel which although it include theſe things within the compaſs of its Law and Order, yet(on ſundry Conſiderations) is of another *kind* than what is required by thoſe Laws, in the *Manner* wherein it is required in them. For it proceedeth from other Principles, on another formal Reaſon and Motives, hath other eſſential Properties, Acts, Duties and Ends, than the Obedience by them required hath. This hath been ſo fully evinced in our Diſcourſe of the *Nature and Neceſſity of Goſpel-Holineſs*, that it need not be here again inſiſted on.

3. Together with the *Light* and *Doctrine* of the Goſpel, or the Preaching of it, there is an *Adminiſtration of the Spirit* to *convince men of Sin, Righteouſneſs, and Judgement.* This God hath *promiſed*, *Iſa.* 59. 21.

and this the Lord Chriſt doth *effect*, where-ever the Word is Orderly diſpenſed according unto his Mind and Will, *Joh.* 16. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. Hereby are men wrought upon unto a *Profeſſion* of this Holineſs, and *Expreſſion* of it in outward Duties. For all that Religion which hath any thing of Truth and Reality in it in the World, is an Effect of the Word and Spirit of Chriſt. Multitudes in all Ages have hereby been made *really holy*, and many yet continue ſo to be. Theſe (as we believe,) ſhall never fall utterly from it, but ſhall be preſerved by *the Power of God through Faith unto Salvation*. But yet ſuch as theſe alſo may decay as unto *Degrees* in Holineſs, and the *Fruitfulneſs* of it. And in every ſuch Decay there is a *partial Apoſtaſie*, and much Diſhonour unto *Jeſus Chriſt*; nor doth any man know in that Condition but that in the iſſue as to his particular, it may be *total* and deſtructive to his Soul. Thus was it with thoſe *Churches* and *Perſons* whom our Lord Jeſus Chriſt chargeth to have *loſt their firſt Faith and Love*, whom he admoniſheth to *remember whence they are fallen*, and *to repent*. And it is principally for the ſake of theſe, that Chriſt and the Goſpel be not diſhonoured by them, nor their Eternal Con-

Concernments hazarded, and thoſe who in the uſe of Means are in a thriving progreſs towards the ſame Condition, that the enſuing Cautions and Warnings are prepared. And others there are who are brought onely unto a *Profeſſion* of this Holineſs, in *inward Convictions* and *outward Dutyes*. And although they are not yet arrived unto a full poſſeſſion of its *Power* and Conformity unto its *Rule*, yet are they in the Way of attaining thereunto. Such as theſe may (on various occaſions) firſt *decay* in their *Profeſſion* and *Duties*, and afterwards utterly *fall from them* into the open Service of Sin and the World.

Thus alſo it is with Churches. At their firſt Planting, they were ſet in a *pure* and *holy ſtate*, as to the *Doctrine*, profeſſed *Holineſs*, and *Worſhip* of the Goſpel. They were all planted *Noble Vines*, wholly of a *right ſeed*, however they turn afterwards into the *degenerate Plant of a ſtrange Vine*. They may loſe of this *Order* and *Beauty*, part with *Truth*, decay in *Holineſs*, and the *faithful City thereby become an Harlot*. How this hath come to paſs, how thereby *Chriſtianity* hath loſt its Glory, Power, and Efficacy in the World, how that Bleſſing which it brought along with it unto the

Nations, is loſt and forfeited, and by what Means, ſhall in ſome principal Inſtances be declared.

4. Where this *Holineſs* is profeſſed, and the *Power* of it evidenced in its *Fruits*, there, and then *alone* is *Chriſt glorified* and Honoured in the World. It is true, there are other things that belong unto that Revenue of Glory which our Lord and King requireth of us. Such are the Profeſſion of the *Truth*, and Obſervance of the *Worſhip* of the Goſpel. But if theſe things are diſjoyned and ſeparate (as they may be) from *holy Obedience*, they no way advance the *Glory of Chriſt*. But where Churches and Perſons profeſſing the *Goſpel*, are *changed* and *renewed into the Image of God*, where their Hearts are *purified* within, and their Lives made *fruitfull* without, where they are *univerſally* under the Conduct of a Spirit of Peace, Love, Meekneſs, Benignity, Self-denyal, Heavenly-mindedneſs, and are *fruitfull* in *good Works*, in which things and other of an alike Nature this *Holineſs* doth conſiſt; there do they make *a due Repreſentation* of the Goſpel and its Author in the World, then do they evidence the *Power*, *Purity* and *Efficacy* of his Doctrine and Grace, whereby he is *glorified*. Here-

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in doth he *ſee of the Travail of his Soul and is ſatisfied*; this is his *portion* and *the Lot of his Inheritance* in this World. But where it is otherwiſe, where Men, where Churches are called by his *Name*, and under a Profeſſion of his *Authority*, and Expectation of *Mercy* and *Eternal Bleſſedneſs* from him, do come ſhort of this *Holineſs*, and walk in Paths contrary unto it, there is the holy Son of God *crucifyed afreſh, and put to open ſhame*.

Theſe things being premiſed, way is made for the due Conſideration of what was before propoſed. For whereas there is an open ſhamefull manifeſt *Apoſtaſie* from the *Holineſs* of the Goſpel, among the moſt who are *called Chriſtians* at this day in the World, it is worth our while to enquire a little into the Reaſons or Cauſes of it, and the Means whereby a ſtop may be put unto it, or at leaſt *particular Perſons* may be preſerved from the Guilt of it, and the Judgements wherein it will iſſue. If any ſhall think that there is not ſuch an *Apoſtaſie* in the World, but that the Face of things in *Europe* and among our ſelves doth make a *due Repreſentation* of the Goſpel, and that thoſe things which we hear of and ſee continually amongſt the generality of Chriſtians,

ſtians, are the true and genuine Effect of the *Doctrine* and *Principles* of our Religion; I ſhall no way contend with them, ſo as that they will but a little ſtand out of our way, and not hinder us in our Progreſs.

Now the *Apoſtaſie* that is in the World from *Goſpel-Holineſs* or *Evangelical Obedience*, is of two Kinds. For ſome fall from it as *formally ſuch*, and others as to the *matter* of it. Of the firſt ſort are they who would advance *another Kind of Obedience*, a Courſe of another ſort of Duties, or the ſame as to the *ſubſtance* of them, but as proceeding from other *Principles*, and carryed on by other *Motives* than what it requireth, in the ſtead thereof. Thus it is with many in the World. They pretend unto a *ſtrictneſs* in ſome Duties, and a *multiplication* of others, at leaſt unto a great Appearance thereof. But it is hard for any one to diſcover how that which they doe, belongeth to *Evangelical Holineſs*, if its Nature depend on *Evangelical Principles* and *Ends*. Others fall from it *openly* and *viſibly*, into a *ſinfull*, *worldly*, *flagitious* Courſe of Life. This is that *Apoſtaſie* which the *Chriſtian World* groans under at this day, and which (as it is to be feared)

feared) will bring the *Judgements* of God upon it. The very *Profeſſion* of *Piety* is much *loſt*, yea much *derided* amongſt many. *Duties* of Holineſs, *Strictneſs* of Converſation, *Communication* unto Edification, are not onely *neglected*, but *ſcorned*. It is in many places a *loſt labour* to ſeek for *Chriſtianity* among *Chriſtians*; And the Degeneracy ſeems to be increaſing every day. It is the *latter* of theſe which I principally intend, as that which is of moſt *univerſal* Concernment. But the former alſo, though under many *ſpecious* Pretences, being of no leſs *pernicious* Event unto many, muſt not be wholly paſſed by. I ſhall therefore firſt give ſome Inſtances of mens *Declenſions* from the holy Wayes of *Goſpel Obedience*, into Paths of *pretended Duties* of their own finding out, and adde thoſe Reaſons of their diſlike of the *Good Old Way*, which gives them Occaſion ſo to doe.

The firſt and moſt ſignal Inſtance of this kind is given us by the *Romaniſts*. None boaſt more than they of *Holineſs*, that is, of their Church, making its *Sanctity* a Note of its *Truth*. But becauſe the *wicked* and *flagitious* Lives, not onely of the *Body of the People* among them, but of many of their chief *Rulers and Guides*, is openly manifeſt;

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in the defence of their confident Claim, as that alone which will give countenance unto it, they betake themſelves unto their *Votaryes*, or thoſe who dedicate themſelves by *Vow* unto more ſtrict Exerciſes in Religion, than others attain or are obliged unto. And this ſort of People have obtained alone the Name and Reputation of *Religious* among them. What is their *Way* and *manner of Life*, what the *Devotion* wherein they ſpend their Hours, what the *Duties* they *oblige* themſelves unto in great variety, and the *manner* wherein they perform them, I ſhall take for granted, and paſs by as generally known. Many have already diſcovered the *Vanity*, *Superſtition* and *Hypocriſie* of the whole *outward Courſe* wherein they are generally ingaged, though they neither do nor ought to judge of the Hearts, Minds and State of *Individuals*, unleſs where by their *Deeds* they manifeſt themſelves; I ſhall onely evince, that what at Beſt they pretend unto, (though boaſted of not onely to be *all*, but *more* than God requireth of them,) is not that *Holineſs* or Obedience which is preſcribed unto us in the *Goſpel*, but ſomewhat ſubſtituted in the room of it, and conſequently in Oppoſition unto it. And

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Firſt, It hath not that *Evidence* of *ſpiritual Freedom and Liberty* which *Goſpel-Holineſs* in all the Duties of it is accompanyed withall. The firſt Effect of its *Truth* upon our Minds, is, *to make us free*, *Joh.* 8. 32. It is the *Principle* of all Holineſs, and enlargeth the Mind and Spirit unto it, whence it is called the *Holineſs of Truth*, *Epheſ.* 4. 24. So *where the Spirit of God is, there is Liberty*, 2 *Cor.* 3. 17. Men are *naturally* the *Servants of Sin*, willingly giving up themſelves unto the fulfilling of its Luſts and Commands, and are *free* onely from *Righteouſneſs*. But where the *Holy Spirit* worketh with the Word of *Truth*, men are made *free from Sin, and become the Servants of God, having their Fruits unto Holineſs*, *Rom.* 6. 20, 22. So it is ſaid of all *Believers*, that they have *not received the Spirit of Bondage again unto Fear, but the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry Abba Father*, Rom. 8. 15. *Not a Spirit of Fear, but of Power and Love, and of a ſound Mind*, 2 Tim. 1. 7. The Meaning of all theſe and the like Teſtimonies, is, that God by his *Grace* enlargeth, *makes free* and ready the Hearts of Believers unto all *Goſpel-Obedience*, ſo as that they ſhall *walk* in it, and perform all the Duties of it *willingly*, *chearfully*,

fully, *freely*, without that Fear and Dread which is an Effect of the Power of the Law. They are not in a *ſcrupulous Bondage* unto outward Duties and the Manner of their Performance, but do all things with *Delight* and *Freedom*. They have by the *Spirit of Adoption* as the *reverential Fear* of Children, ſo their Gracious *Inclination* unto Obedience. But in that Exerciſe of *Devotion*, and multiplyed outward Duties of Religion which the *Romaniſts* boaſt of as their eſpecial Sanctity, there are great Evidences of a Servile *Bondage*, or ſlaviſh Frame of *Spirit*. For they are forced to *bind* themſelves, and to be bound unto it by *eſpecial Vows*, in whoſe Obſervation they no more act as their own Guardians, or as thoſe who are *ſui Juris*, but are under the coercive *Diſcipline* of others, and outward Puniſhment in caſe of Failure. And thoſe who are ſo *Servants of Men* in Religious Duties are not *Gods Free-men*, nor have they Chriſt for their *Lord* in that Caſe, who have another. The Foundation of all theſe Duties, and which alone obligeth them unto their Performance, are *Vows* no where required by God or our Lord Chriſt in the Goſpel. And the principal Regard which any have in their *ſtrict Attendance*

tendance unto them, is the *Obedience* which they owe unto the *Super-Intendents* of thoſe Vows. It is eaſie to apprehend how inconſiſtent this Way is with that *ſpiritual Freedom*, and *Liberty* of Mind which inſeparably accompanyeth true *Goſpel-Holineſs*. Beſides, the Opinion of *Merit*, which not onely goeth along with them, but alſo *animates* them in all theſe Services, makes them *ſervile* in all they doe. For they cannot but know, that every thing in *Merit* muſt not onely be tryed by the Touch-ſtone of *Sincerity*, but weighed in the Ballance to the *utmoſt ſcruple*, to find out what it amounts or comes unto. And this is perfectly deſtructive of that *Liberty* in Obedience which the Goſpel requireth. So alſo is that tormenting Perſwaſion which they are under the Power of, namely, *That they have no Grounds of Confidence or Aſſurance, that either they are accepted with God here, or ſhall come to the bleſſed Enjoyment of him hereafter.* Hence in all Duties they muſt of Neceſſity be acted with a Spirit of *Fear*, and not of *Power* and a *ſound Mind*.

Secondly, The *Rule* of their *Dutics* and *Obedience*, as to what is in their *own judgements* Eminent therein, is not the *Goſpel*, but a *Syſteme* of peculiar *Laws* and *Rules* that they have

have framed for themſelves. So ſome obey the Rule of *Benedict*, ſome of *Francis*, ſome of *Dominic*, ſome of *Ignatius*, and the like. This utterly caſts out their *whole Endeavour* from any Intereſt in *Goſpel-Holineſs*; For the Formal Nature of that conſiſts herein, that it is a *Conformity* unto the *Rule of the Goſpel* as ſuch, or a Complyance with the *Will* of God as manifeſted therein. Hence do they multiply *unrequired Duties*, yea, the principal parts of their *Devotion* and Sanctity conſiſt in *them* which are of their own *deviſing*, for which they have no Goſpel *Precept* or *Command*. And ſuch in particular are thoſe *Vows* which are the Foundation of all that they doe. In this Caſe our Saviour Reproving the *Phariſees* for their additional Duties beyond the Preſcript of the *Word*, ſhews them how they made *the Commandment of God of none Effect by their Traditions*, and that *in vain* they *worſhipped* God, *teaching the Commandments* of Men; *Matth.* 14. 6, 9. And when they were offended at his Rejection of one of their new-impoſed Duties; he replyes, That *every Plant which his Heavenly Father hath not planted ſhould be rooted up*; ver. 13. So wholly rejecting all thoſe Religious Duties which they had framed by Rules of their

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own deviſing. Nor are theſe of the *Roman* Devotioniſts of any better Conſtitution; they are *Plants* of mens *own planting*, and ſhall be rooted up accordingly and caſt into the fire. Let the *Number* of falſe invented Duties of Religion be never ſo *great*, let the *Manner* of their Performance be never ſo *exact* or *ſevere*, they ſerve to no other End but to *divert* the Minds of Men from the Obedience which the Goſpel requireth.

Thirdly, There is nothing in all that is *preſcribed* by the *Maſters* of this Devotion, or *practiſed* by the *Diſciples*, but it may all be done and obſerved without either *Faith* in Chriſt, or a Senſe of his *Love* unto our Souls. The Obedience of the Goſpel is the *Obedience of Faith*; on that and no other *root* will it grow; And the principal Motive unto it is the *Love of Chriſt*, which *conſtraineth unto it.* But what is there in all *their Preſcriptions* that theſe things are neceſſary unto? May not men riſe at Midnight to repeat a Number of Prayers, or goe Bare-foot, or wear Sackcloth, or abſtain from Fleſh at certain Times or alwayes, ſubmit to Diſcipline from themſelves or others, and (if they have bodily Strength to enable them,) undergoe all the

horrid (and indeed *ridiculous*) Hardſhips of *ſtanding on a Pillar* continually, or *bearing* great *loggs of Wood* on their Shoulders all the day long, that are told or fabled of the *Egyptian Monks*, without the leaſt Dram of ſaving *Faith* or *Love?* All *falſe* Religions have ever had ſome amongſt them who have had an Ambition to amuze others with theſe *ſelf-afflictions* and *macerations*, wherein the Devotions among the *Bannians* do exceed at this day whatever the *Romaniſts* pretend unto.

Fourthly, The *whole* of what they doe, is ſo *vitiated* and *corrupted* with the proud Opinion of *Merit* and *Supererrogation*, as renders it utterly *forreign* unto the *Goſpel*. It is not my preſent Buſineſs to *diſpute* againſt thoſe Opinions. It hath been already abundantly manifeſted, (and may be yet ſo again where it is neceſſary,) that they wholly *enervate* the *Covenant of Grace*, are *injurious* to the *Blood* and *Mediation* of Chriſt, and are utterly inconſiſtent with the *fundamental Principles* of the Goſpel. Whereas therefore theſe proud Imaginations do animate their whole Courſe of Duties, the Goſpel is not concerned in what they doe.

And we may adde unto what hath been re-

remarked already, the Conſideration of that *groſs Superſtition*, yea and *Idolatry*, which they give up themſelves unto, almoſt in moſt of their Devotions. This is not the leaſt of their Tranſgreſſions in theſe things, but is ſufficient to *violate* all they doe beſides. Wherefore, notwithſtanding their Pretence unto *Sanctity*, and a more ſtrict Attendance unto Duties of Obedience than other men; yet it is manifeſt, that the Beſt of them are under a *Defection* from the *Holineſs* of the Goſpel, ſubſtituting an Obedience unto their own Imaginations in the room thereof.

Again, Others confine the *whole* of their Obedience unto *Morality*, and *deride* whatever is pleaded as *above* it and *beyond* it under the Name of *Evangelical Grace*, as *Enthuſiaſtical Folly*. And the Truth is, if thoſe Perſons who plead for the Neceſſity of Goſpel *Grace* and *Holineſs*, which is more than ſo, do underſtand each other, and that ſomewhat of the ſame things are not intended by them under different Expreſſions and divers Methods of their Management, they are not of the ſame Religion. But if they miſtake the Meaning of each other, and differ onely in the *Manner of Teaching* the ſame Truth, I ſuppoſe they

ſteer the ſafeſt Courſe and freeſt from juſt Offence, who follow and comply with the *Manner* wherein the things intended are taught in the *Scripture*, rather than thoſe who accommodate their Diſcourſes unto the *Phraſeology* of Heathen Philoſophers. But the Truth is, the Difference ſeems to be *real*, and the Principles men proceed upon in theſe things are *contradictory* to each other. For ſome do plainly affirm, that the *whole* of Goſpel Obedience conſiſts in the Obſervance of *Moral Vertue*, which they ſo deſcribe as to render it excluſive of *Evangelical Grace*. This others judge to contain an open *Declenſion* from, and waving of Goſpel Holineſs. It is granted freely, that the performance of all *Moral Duties* Evangelically, that is, in the Power of the Grace of Chriſt, unto the Glory of God by him, is an Eſſential part of Goſpel Obedience. And whoever they are who (under the pretence of *Grace*, or any thing elſe,) do neglect the Improvement of *Moral Vertues*, or the Obſervance of the Duties of Morality, they are ſo far diſobedient unto the Goſpel and the Law thereof. And ſome Men do not underſtand how contemptible they render themſelves in the Management of their Cauſe, when they

they charge others with an Oppoſition unto *Morality*, or *Moral Vertue*, and ſetting up they know not what *imaginary Holineſs* in the room thereof. For, thoſe whom they ſo calumniate, are not onely immediately diſcharged from any ſenſe of Guilt herein, by the Teſtimony of their own Conſciences, but all other men, ſo far as the Rule of Ingenuity is extended, do from the knowledge of their *Doctrine*, and Obſervation of their *Practice*, avouch their Innocence.

But is it not ſo then, that men do *condemn Morality* as that which is not to be Truſted unto, but will deceive them that reſt in or upon it? I anſwer, they do ſo, when it is made (as it is by ſome) the *whole* of Religion, and as it is obtruded into the place of Evangelical Grace and Holineſs by others. They take *Moral Vertue* (as it alwayes was taken, untill of late) for *natural Honeſty*, or ſuch a Conformity of Life unto the Light of *Nature*, as to be uſefull and approved among men. But this may be; Men may doe that which is *morally Good*, and yet never doe any thing that is accepted with God. For they may doe it, but not for the Love of *God* above all, but for the Love of *Self*. And therefore *they* charge

Morality with an Inſufficiency unto the Ends of Religion, or the ſaving of the Souls of Men;

(1) Where nothing is intended by it, but that whereof the *Rule* and *Meaſure* is the *Light of Nature*; For that doth direct unto every Duty that is properly *Moral*. And what it doth not direct unto, what is not Naturally by the Law of our *Creation* Obligatory unto all Mankind, cannot be called *Moral*. Now to confine all Religion as to the Preceptive and Obediential part of it, unto the *Light of Nature*, is to Evacuate one half of the *Goſpel*.

(2) Where it is in *practice* an Effect of *Conviction* onely, and performed in the *innate ſtrength* of the Rational Faculties of our Souls, without the eſpecial ſupernatural Aid of the *Spirit* and *Grace* of God. Whatever Name any thing may be called by that is not wrought *In us* by the *Grace* of God, as well as *By us* in a way of *Duty*, is foreign unto *Evangelical Obedience*. And thoſe who reject *Morality* as inſufficient unto Acceptation with God and Eternal Salvation, intend onely what is of that kind performed in the Powers of our *Natural Faculties* externally excited and directed, without any ſupernatural Influence or Ope-

ration

ration of *especial Grace*. And indeed so to place a Confidence in such Duties, is open *Pelagianisme*.

(3) Where it proceedeth not from the *spiritual supernatural Renovation* of our Souls. The Rule and Method of the Gospel is, that the *Tree be first made Good*, and then the *Fruit* will be so also. Unless a person be first *Regenerate*, and his *Nature* therein Renewed into the *Image* and *Likeness* of *God*, unless he be endued with a New Principle of *spiritual Life* from above, enabling him to Live unto God, he can do nothing of whatsoever sort it be, that is absolutely *acceptable* unto God. And it is especially under this Consideration that any reject *Morality*, as not Comprehensive of *Gospel Obedience*; yea as that which is apt to draw off the Mind from it, and which will deceive them that trust to it; namely, that it proceedeth not from the *Principle* of *Grace* in a *renewed Soul*. For whatever doth so, though it may be Originally of a *Moral Nature* in its self, yet from the Manner of its Performance it becomes *gracious* and Evangelical. And we need not fear to exclude the *best* Works of Unrenewed Persons from being any part of *Gospel Holinesse* or *Obedience*.

(4) Where thoſe in whom it is, or who pretend unto it, are really deſtitute of the internal *Light of ſaving Grace* enabling them to diſcern *ſpiritual things* in a *ſpiritual manner*, and to know the Myſteries of the Kingdom of God. That there is ſuch a *ſaving Light* wrought in the Minds of Believers by the Holy Ghoſt, that without it men cannot diſcern *ſpiritual things*, ſo as to ſavour, like, and approve of them, hath been elſewhere at large demonſtrated. But this belongs not unto the *Morality* contended about. It is not onely independent on it, but is indeed ſet up in competition with it, and oppoſition unto it. No man need fear to judge and cenſure that *Morality* as unto its Intereſt in Goſpel Obedience, and Sufficiency unto the Salvation of the *Souls* of Men, which may be obtained, practiſed and lived up unto, where God doth not *ſhine into the Hearts of Men* to give them the *Knowledge of his Glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*; where no work of *ſpiritual Illumination* hath been in their *minds* enabling them to *diſcern and know the Mind of God*, which none knoweth Originally *but the Spirit of God, by whom they are made known unto us*; 1 *Cor.*2.11,12. Yet this is that which ſome Men ſeem to take up withall,

withall, and reſt in, unto the Rejection of Evangelical Obedience.

Laſtly, The ſame *Cenſure* is to be paſſed on it, wherever it is ſeparable from thoſe Fundamental Goſpel Graces which both in their Natures, Acts, and Objects are purely *ſupernatural*, having no Principle, Rule or Meaſure but *Truth ſupernaturally revealed*. Such in particular is the whole regard we have unto the *Mediation of Chriſt*, as alſo the *Diſpenſation* of *the Spirit* promiſed to abide with the Church for ever as its *Comforter*, with all the Duties of Obedience which depend thereon. He is ignorant of the Goſpel, that knows not that in theſe things do lye the *fundamental Principles* of its Doctrine and Precepts, and that in the Exerciſe of thoſe Graces in a way of Duty which immediately concerns them, conſiſt the principal parts of the Life of God, or of that Obedience unto him by Jeſus Chriſt, which is indiſpenſibly required of all that ſhall be ſaved. Whereas therefore theſe things cannot be eſteemed meerly *Moral Vertues*, nor do at all belong unto, but are conſidered as ſeparate from all that *Morality* which is judged inſufficient unto *Life* and *Salvation*, it is evident that it is not in the leaſt dealt withall too ſeverely,

ſeverely, nor cenſured more harſhly than it doth deſerve. If therefore any betake themſelves hereunto as to the *whole* of their Duty, it comes under the account of that *partial Defection* from the Goſpel which we enquire into.

Some there are who, as unto themſelves, pretend they have attained unto *Perfection* already in this World; ſuch a Perfection in all *degrees of Holineſs* as the Goſpel is but an Introduction towards. But this proud Imagination, deſtructive of the *Covenant of Grace*, of all Uſe and Mediation of the *Blood of Chriſt*, contrary to innumerable Teſtimonies of *Scripture*, and the *Experience* of all that do Believe, and concerning which their own *Conſciences* do reprove the Pretenders unto it, needs not detain us in its Examination. It is ſufficient unto our *preſent Deſign* to have given theſe Inſtances, How men may in a *pretended Conſcientious Diſcharge* of many Duties of Obedience, yet *fall off* and *decline* from that which the Goſpel requireth. The *Occaſions* and *Reaſons* hereof (ſuppoſing thoſe more *General* before conſidered with reſpect unto the *Truth of the Goſpel*, which all of them take place here, and have their Influence upon their Diſlike of its *Holineſs*,) may

may be briefly enquired into, and repreſented. Nor ſhall we confine our ſelves unto the Inſtances given, but take in the Conſideration of every *Declenſion* from it, which on any Account befalls them who having had a *Conviction* of its *Neceſſity*, yet refuſe to come unto its *univerſal practice*. And to this End we may obſerve:

Firſt, That the *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requireth, will not be *kept up* nor maintained either in the *Hearts* or *Lives* of men, without *a continual Conflict*, warring, contending; and that with all Care, Diligence, Watchfulneſs, and Perſeverance therein. It is our *Warfare*, and the Scripture abounds in the Diſcovery of the *Adverſaries* we have to Conflict withall, their Power and Subtilty, as alſo in Directions and Encouragements unto their Reſiſtance. To ſuppoſe that *Goſpel Obedience* will be maintained in our Hearts and Lives without a continual Management of a *vigorous Warfare* againſt its Enemies, is to deny the *Scripture* and the *Experience* of all that do Believe and Obey God in Sincerity. *Sathan*, *Sin*, and the *World*, are continually aſſaulting of it, and ſeeking to ruine its *Intereſt* in us. The Devil will not be *reſiſted*, which it is our Duty to doe, (1 *Pet.* 5. 8, 9.) with-

out a ſharp *Conteſt* and *Conflict*; in the Management whereof we are commanded to *take unto our ſelves the whole Armour of God*; *Epheſ.* 6. 12. *Fleſhly Luſts* do continually *warre* againſt our Souls, 1 *Pet.* 2.11. and if we maintain not a *Warfare* unto the End againſt them, they will be our *ruine*. Nor will the *Power* of the World be any otherwiſe avoided than by a *Victory* over it, 1 *Joh.* 5. 4. which will not be carryed without *Contending*. But I ſuppoſe it needs no great Confirmation unto any who know what it is to *ſerve* and *obey* God in *Temptations*, that the *Life* of *Faith* and *Race* of *Holineſs* will not be *preſerved* nor continued in, without a ſevere *ſtriving*, *labouring*, *contending*, *warring*, with Diligence, Watchfulneſs and Perſeverance; So that I ſhall at preſent take it as a Principle (Notionally at leaſt,) agreed upon by the Generality of Chriſtians. If we like not to be *Holy* on theſe Terms, we muſt let it alone, for on any other we ſhall never be ſo. If we *faint* in this Courſe, if we give it over, if we think what we aim at herein not to be worth the obtaining or preſerving by ſuch a *ſevere Contention* all our dayes, we muſt be content to be without it. Nothing doth ſo promote the Intereſt of *Hell* and *Deſtruction*

ſtruction in the World, as a Preſumption that a *lazy ſlothfull Performance* of ſome *Duties*, and *Abſtinence* from ſome *Sins*, is that which God will *accept* of as our *Obedience*. Crucifying of *Sin*, mortifying our *inordinate Affections*, conteſting againſt the whole Intereſt of the *Fleſh*, *Sathan*, and the *World*, and that in *inward* Actings of Grace, and all Inſtances of *outward* Duties, and that *alwayes* while we live in this *World*, are required of us hereunto.

Here lyes the *firſt Spring* of the Apoſtaſie of many in the World, of them eſpecially who betake themſelves unto, and take up Satisfaction in *another Way* of Duties than what the Goſpel requireth. They had (it is poſſible) by their *Light* and *Convictions* made ſo near Approaches unto it, as to ſee what an *unceſſant Travail* of Soul is required unto its Attainment and Preſervation.

They are like the *Iſraelites* travailing in the *Wilderneſs* towards the Land of *Canaan*. When they came neer unto the Borders and Entrance of it, they ſent ſome to *ſpy it out*, that they might know the *Nature* and *State* of the Land and Countrey whither they were going. Theſe for their Encouragement, and to evince the Fruit-

Fruitfulneſs of the Earth, bring unto them *a Branch with one Cluſter of Grapes* ſo Great and Fair that they *bare it between two on a ſtaffe*, and *they brought alſo Pomegranates and Figs*; *Numb.* 13. 23. But withall, they told them of the *hideous Difficulties* they were to Conflict withall, in that the People were *ſtrong*, their *Cities walled*, and the *Anakims* dwelling among them, *ver.* 28. This utterly diſheartens the *carnal People*, and notwithſtanding the Proſpect they had of the Land that *flowed with Milk and Honey*, back again they goe into the *Wilderneſs*, and there they periſh.

So it is with theſe Perſons; Notwithſtanding the neer Approach they have made by *Light* and *Convictions* unto the *Kingdom of God*, (as our Saviour told the *Young Man* who was as one of them; *Mark* 12. 34.) and the Proſpect they have of the *Beauty* of *Holineſs*, yet turn off from it again and periſh in the *Wilderneſs*. For upon the View they have of the Difficulties which lye in the Conflict mentioned, they fall under many Diſadvantages which at length utterly divert them from its purſuit. As,

(1) *Wearineſs of the Fleſh*, not enduring to comply with that conſtant Courſe of *Duties* continually returning upon it, which

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is required thereunto. Various Pleas will be made for an Exemption from them, at leaſt in ſome *troubleſome Inſtances.* And the carnal Mind will not want Pretences to countenance the Fleſh in its *Wearineſs.* Hereon, one Duty after another is firſt *omitted* and then utterly *foregone*; Neglect of a vigorous Conſtancy in *ſubduing the Body*, and *bringing of it into ſubjection*, commended by the Apoſtle in his own *Example*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. is with many the *beginning* of this kind of Apoſtaſie. Theſe things (I ſay) will oft-times fall out, that through the *wearineſs* and Averſation of the Fleſh, countenanced by various Pretences of the *carnal Mind*, ſundry Duties will be omitted. But this is the *Faith* and *Trial* of the Saints, here is the difference between *ſound Believers*, and thoſe who are acted onely by *Convictions.* Thoſe of the *firſt* ſort will ſooner or later (for the moſt part ſpeedily) be *humbled* for ſuch Omiſſions, and recover their former Diligence according to the Prayer of the Pſalmiſt; *Pſal.* 119. *ult.* But where this Ground is won by the *Fleſh*, and men grow ſatisfied under the Loſs of any Duty, it is an Evidence of a *hypocritical back-ſliding Heart.*

(2) When men are come unto the *height* of

of their *Convictions*, and proceed no farther, *Indwelling Sin* with its Luſts and corrupt Affections, (which have for a while been checked and mated by Light,) will inſenſibly *prevail*, and weary the *Mind* with Sollicitations for the Exerciſe of its old *dominion*. For the *Spring* of it being not dryed, the *bitter Root* of it being not digged up nor withered, it will not ceaſe untill it hath *broke down* all the Bounds that were fixed unto it, and bear down *Convictions* with Force and Violence.

(3) *Ignorance* of the *true Way* of making *Application* unto the *Lord Chriſt* for *Grace* and *Supplyes of the Spirit*, to bring them unto, or preſerve them in a State of *Goſpel-Holineſs*, is of the ſame importance. Without this, to dream of being *holy* according unto the Mind of God, is to renounce the *Goſpel*. We need not look farther for Mens *Apoſtaſie* than this, if they are *ſatisfied* with ſuch an Holineſs, ſuch an Obedience, as is not *derived* unto us by the *Grace of Chriſt*, nor *wrought* in us by the *Spirit of Chriſt*, nor *preſerved* in us by the *Power of Chriſt*. The *Way* hereof ſuch Perſons are alwayes *ignorant* of, and at length do openly *deſpiſe*. Yet may men as well *ſee* without the Sun or Light, or *breathe* without the Ayre,

or

or *live* without Natural Spirits, as engage into or abide in the practice of *Goſpel-Holineſs* without continual Applications unto *Chriſt* the Fountain of all Grace, for *ſpiritual ſtrength* enabling them thereunto. The Way and Means hereof theſe Perſons being *ignorant* of, and unacquainted withall, the *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requireth becomes unto them a thing *ſtrange* and burdenſome, which therefore they deſert and refuſe. If therefore it be true, that *without Chriſt we can doe nothing*; that in our Life unto God, *he liveth in us*, and Efficiently *is our Life*; if from him (as the *Head*) Nouriſhment is ſupplyed unto every *living Member* of the Body; if the *Life* which we lead *be by the Faith of the Son of God*, and the onely Way of deriving theſe things and all Supplyes of *ſpiritual Strength* from him, be by the Exerciſe of *Faith* in him; it follows unavoidably that all thoſe who are unacquainted with this Way, who know not how to make their *Application* unto him for this End and Purpoſe, can never perſevere in a Purſuit of *Goſpel-Holineſs*. So hath it fallen out and no otherwiſe with them concerning whom we ſpeak; As *Ignorance* of the *Righteouſneſs of God*, or of *Chriſt's being the End of the Law for Righte-*

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ouſneſs unto them that do Believe, is the Reaſon why Men go about to *eſtabliſh a Righteouſneſs of their own*, and will not *ſubmit to the Righteouſneſs of God*; ſo *Ignorance* of the *Grace* which is continually to be received from Chriſt in a way of *Believing*, that we may be *holy* with *Goſpel-Holineſs*, is the Reaſon why ſo many turn off from it, unto *another kind* of Holineſs of their *own framing*, which *yet is not another*, becauſe it is none at all. But many are ſo far from *endeavouring* after, or *abiding* in Goſpel-Holineſs on this Foundation of *continual Supplyes of Grace* from Jeſus Chriſt to that End, as that they avowedly *deſpiſe* all Holineſs and Obedience ſpringing from that Fountain, or growing on that Root; in which Caſe God will judge. In the mean time, I ſay, (and the matter is evident,) that one principal Reaſon why men turn off from it upon the Proſpect of the *Difficulties* that attend it, and the *Oppoſitions* that are made unto it, is their *Unbelief* and *Ignorance* in the Way of *making Application* unto *Chriſt* by Faith, for Supplyes of ſpiritual Strength and Grace.

(4) *Unacquaintedneſs* with the true Nature of *Evangelical Repentance*, is another Cauſe

Cauſe hereof. This is that *Grace* which comfortably carryeth the Souls of Believers thorough all their Failings, Infirmities and Sins. Nor are they able to *live to God One day* without the conſtant Exerciſe of it. They find it as Neceſſary unto the Continuance of ſpiritual Life, as *Faith* it ſelf. It is not only a *Means* of our Entrance into, but it belongs *eſſentially* unto our Goſpel-ſtate and our Continuance therein. Hereunto belongs that continual humble *Self-abaſement*, from a Senſe of the *Majeſty* and *Holineſs* of God, with the *diſproportion* of the Beſt of our Duties unto his Will, which Believers *live* and *walk* in continually; And he that is not ſenſible of a gracious *ſweetneſs* and *uſefulneſs* therein, knows not what it is to *walk with God*. Hereby doth God adminiſter ſeveral Encouragements unto our Souls to abide in our Way of Obedience; notwithſtanding the many Diſcouragements and Deſpondencies we meet withall. In brief, take it away, and you overthrow *Faith* and *Hope* and all other Graces. Thoſe therefore who are unacquainted with the Nature and Uſe of this *Grace* and *Duty*, who can taſte no ſpiriritual *Refreſhment* in all its Sorrows, who know nothing of it but *legal Troubles*, Anguiſh,

guiſh, Fear and Diſtractions, will not endure the Thoughts of living in the *practice* of it all their dayes, which yet is as Neceſſary unto *Goſpel-Holineſs*, as *Faith* it ſelf. Men I ſay falling into this Condition, finding all theſe *Difficulties* to Conflict withall, and lying under theſe Diſadvantages, if any thing will offer it ſelf in the room of this Coſtly *Holineſs*, they will readily embrace it. Hence, as ſome betake themſelves unto a *pretence of Morality*, (which as unto many is a *meer Pretence*, and made uſe of onely to countenance themſelves in a *Neglect* of the *whole* of that Obedience which the Goſpel openly requireth;) ſo others doe under other Expreſſions retreat unto the meer *Duties of their own Light*, and thoſe as onely required therein, with ſome peculiar Reliefs unto the *Fleſh* in what is *burdenſome* unto it. As for Inſtance; There is nothing that the *Fleſh* more riſeth up in a Diſlike of, and Oppoſition unto, than Conſtancy in the Duty of *Prayer*, in Private, in Families, on all Occaſions; eſpecially if attended unto in a *ſpiritual Manner* as the *Goſpel* doth require. But in it *ſelf*, and as to the *ſubſtance* of it, it is a Duty which the *Light of Nature* exacteth of us. But whereas this may prove *burden-*

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ſome to the *Fleſh*, a Relief is borrowed from a Pretence of *Goſpel Light* and Liberty, that men need not Pray at any time, unleſs their *own Spirits* or *Light* do previouſly require it of them; which is to *turn the Grace of God* into an *Occaſion of ſinning*. By this Means ſome have gotten an *Holineſs* wherein for the moſt part it ſeems *indifferent* to them whether they *pray* at any time or no. And other Inſtances of the like Kind might be given. Upon the whole matter, to *free* themſelves from this State, ſo uneaſie to Fleſh and Blood, ſo contrary unto all the Imaginations of the carnal Mind, ſome men have betaken themſelves unto *another*, wherein they have (or pretend to have) no *Conflict* againſt Sin, nor to need any *Application* unto the Lord Chriſt for Supplyes of *ſpiritual Strength*, which belongs not unto that *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requires, and which God accepts.

It may be ſaid, that in ſome of the *Inſtances* before given, eſpecially in that of the *Papacy*, there is an Appearance of a *greater Conflict* with, and more *hardſhips* put on *the Fleſh*, than in any other way of Obedience that is pleaded for. And there is indeed ſuch an *Appearance*, but it is no

more. The Oppoſitions that ariſe againſt their *Auſterities*, are from *without*, or from Nature as it is *weak*, but not as it is *carnal*. It is poſſible that *Sin* may not be concern'd in what they do, neither in its *Power* nor *Reign*; Yea ſo far as it is leavened by *Superſtition*, it acts it ſelf therein no leſs than it doth in others by *fleſhly Luſts*. But it is an *internal ſpiritual immediate* Oppoſition unto its *Being* and all its Actings, that it riſeth up with ſuch Rage againſt, as to *weary* thoſe who have not that *living Principle* of *Faith* whereto the Victory over it doth peculiarly appertain.

Secondly, This *Evangelical Holineſs* will not *allow* of, nor will *conſiſt* with the conſtant *habitual* Omiſſion of any *one Duty*, or the Satisfaction of *any one Luſt* of the *Mind* or of the *Fleſh*. As we are in all Inſtances of *Duty* to be *perfecting Holineſs in the fear of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1; ſo *no Proviſion* is *to be made for the Fleſh, to fulfill the Luſts thereof*. *Rom.* 13. 14. This is that which loſeth it ſo many Friends in the World. Would it barter with the *Fleſh*, would it give and take *Allowances* in any kind, or grant *Indulgence* unto any one Sin, Multitudes would have a *kindneſs* for it, which now bid it *defiance*. Every one would have

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an Exemption for that Sin which he *likes beſt*, and which is *moſt ſuited* to his Inclinations and carnal Intereſts. And this would be Virtually *a Diſpenſation* for all Unholineſs whatever. But theſe are the Terms of the *Goſpel*; no one Duty is to be *neglected*, no one Sin is to be *indulged*, and they are looked upon as *intolerable*. *Naaman* would not give up himſelf unto the *Worſhip* of the God of *Iſrael* but with this Reſerve, That he might alſo *bow in the Houſe of Rimmon*, whereon his *Power* and *Preferment* did depend. *Many things* the *Young Man* in the Goſpel boaſted himſelf to have done, and was (doubtleſs) willing to continue in the Performance of them; But yet through his whole Courſe, *the Love of the World* had the *Prevalency* in him, and when he was *tryed* in that Inſtance, rather than relinquiſh *it*, he gave up the *whole*. But this is the *Law* of the *Goſpel*: Although it provide a *mercifull Relief* againſt thoſe daily Sins which we are *overtaken withall* by our Frailty and Weakneſs, or *ſurprized* into by the Power of Temptations, againſt the Bent of our Minds and habitual Inclination of our Wills, (1 *Pet.* 2. 1, 2.) yet it alloweth not the Cheriſhing or Practice of *any one Sin*,

Internal or External whatever. An *habitual Course* in any Sin, is utterly inconsistent with *Evangelical Obedience*, 1 *Joh.* 3. 6, 7, 8, 9. Yea it requireth indispensibly that we be engaged in our Minds and Wills, in an Opposition unto *all Sin*, and a constant Endeavour after its *not being* in us, either in the *Root* or in the *Fruit* thereof. It will not *connive* at, or *comply* with any inordinate Affection, any habitual sinfull Distemper, nor the first Motions of Sin that are in the Flesh. This is that *Perfection* which is required in the *New Covenant*, *Gen.* 17.1. that *Sincerity*, *Integrity*, *freedom from Guile*, *walking after the Spirit and not after the Flesh*, and *Newness of Life*, which the Gospel every where prescribeth unto us. On no other Terms but *Universality* in *Obedience* and *Opposition* unto *Sin*, will it approve of us, 1 *Joh.* 3. 8, 9.

And this occasioneth the *turning aside* of many from the Pursuit of an Endeavour to be *holy* according unto the Rule of the Gospel. When by their *Light* and *Convictions* they come to take a view of what is required thereunto, it displeaseth them, they cannot bear it, and therefore either at *once* or *gradually* give over all Wayes of pursuing their first Design. And men break with

with the *Gospel* on this Account, by the Means ensuing.

First, They cannot make the *same judgement of Sin* that the *Gospel* doth, nor will judge all those things to be Sin and Evil which the Gospel declares so to be. Yea we have some come unto that *Pharisaisme*, that they scarce think any thing to be *sinfull*, or worth taking notice of, unless it be openly *flagitious*. Under this Darkness and Ignorance all sorts of *filthy noysome Lusts* may be cherished in the Hearts of Men, keeping them at as great and real a Distance from the *Holiness of Truth*, as the *most outragious outward Sins* can doe. And this Neglect or Refusal to comply with the Rule of the Gospel before laid down, is grounded in and promoted by two Occasions.

1. They have *a willing Insensibility* of the Guilt of some *unmortified Lust*; this they will abide in and cherish. For their Minds being *habituated* unto it, they find *no great evil* in it, nor do see any cogent Reason why they should foregoe it. So was it with the *Young Man* with respect unto the *Love of the World*. He was sorry that he could not be *Evangelically* Obedient whilest he retained it; but seeing that would

would not be, he did not diſcern any ſuch Evil in, nor was ſenſible of any ſuch Guilt from it, nor could apprehend any ſuch Equality in, or Neceſſity of *Goſpel-Holineſs*, that he ſhould renounce the one for the embracing of the other. So will it be when any Luſt is made *familiar* unto the Mind; it will not be *terrified* with it, nor can ſee any great *danger* in it. It is between ſuch a *Soul* and *Sin* as it is between the *Devil* and the *Witch*, or one that hath a *familiar Spirit*, as we render the *Hebrew Ob* and *Jideoni*. At the firſt Appearance of the Devil, be it in what Shape it will, it cannot but bring a *Tremor* and Fear on Humane Nature. But after a while he becomes a *familiar*, and when alone he is to be *feared*, he is not *feared at all*. The poor deceived Wretch then thinks him in his Power, ſo that he can uſe or command him as he ſees good; whereas he himſelf is abſolutely in the Power of the Devil. Men may be *ſtartled* with Sin in its firſt Appearance, on their firſt *Convictions*, or its firſt dangerous *Efforts*; but when it is become their *Familiar*, they ſuppoſe it a thing in their *own Power*, which they can uſe or not uſe as they ſee Occaſion; though indeed themſelves are the *ſervants of corruption*

ruption, being *overcome* thereby and brought into Bondage. Hence it is inconceivable how little ſenſe of Guilt in ſome Sins men find, after they are *habituated* unto them. In *ſome ſins* I ſay, for with reſpect unto *Sins abſolutely* againſt the *Light of Nature*, Conſcience will not eaſily be bribed not to *condemn* them. It will not in ſuch Caſes be *ſpeechleſs*, untill it be ſeared and made *ſenſeleſs*. But there are Sins not accompanyed with ſo *great an Evidence*, yet attended with *no leſs Guilt* than thoſe which directly militate againſt the *Light of Nature*. In this Caſe, when the Word of the *Goſpel* comes, as it is *living* and *powerfull*, *ſharper than any two-edged Sword*, *piercing even to the dividing aſunder of the Soul and Spirit*, *and of the Joynts and Marrow*, as a *Diſcoverer and Judge of the Thoughts and Intents of the Heart*; When it comes and diſcovers the ſecret Frames, Figments, Imaginations, Inclinations of the Mind, and condemneth what is in the leaſt Meaſure or Manner *irregular*; when it will not be put off, nor accept of any Compoſition or Compenſation by the moſt *ſtrict* and *rigid Profeſſion* in other things; Men are ready to *withdraw* themſelves to the Rule of their own *Light* and *Reaſon*, which they find more *gentle* and *tractable*.

2. A *Derelict*ion of the *Goſpel* on this Account with reſpect unto the *inwardneſs*, *ſpirituality* and *extent* of its *Commands*, is much increaſed under the Influence of *corrupt Opinions*. And of this Nature are all thoſe which tend unto the *Extenuation* of *Sin*. For ſome there are who ſuppoſe that there is not ſuch a *provoking Guilt*, ſuch a *ſpiritual Outrage* in Sin, as others pretend. Hence multitudes, as they judge, are *needleſſely* troubled and perplexed about it. A *generous Mind* free from ſuperſtitious Fears, and dark Conceits imbibed in *Education*, will deliver the Mind of Man from the trouble of ſuch Apprehenſions. A *great ſenſe* of the Guilt of *ſmall Sins*, is an Engine to promote the Intereſt of *Preachers*, and thoſe who pretend to the Conduct of *Conſcience*. The *Filth* and *Pollution* of Sin, is a *Metaphor* which *few* can underſtand, and *none* ought to be concerned in. That the *Power* of the Remainder of *In-dwelling Sin* is a *fooliſh Notion*; and that the *diſorderly Frames* of the *Heart*, and the *Mind*, through Darkneſs, Deadneſs, ſpiritual Indiſpoſition, or other ſecret Irregularities, are *Fancies*, not *Sins*, which we need not be troubled at our ſelves, nor make any Acknowledgement of unto God. Theſe

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and the like Opinions are the *Phariſaical Corban* of our Age, corrupting the *whole Law* of our *Obedience*. And it were eaſie to manifeſt, how *perillous* and *ruinous* they are unto the Souls of Men; what *powerful Inſtruments* in the hand of Sathan to eclipſe the Glory of the *Grace* of *Chriſt* on the one hand, and to promote *Apoſtaſie* from *Holineſs* in the Hearts and Lives of men on the other. I ſhall onely ſay, ſet the corrupt Heart of Man by any Means *at Liberty* from an Awe and Reverence of the *Holineſs* of *God* and his *Law*, with reſpect unto the *inward* Actings and Frames of the Soul, with a ſenſe of Guilt where they are *irregular*, and a Neceſſity of conſtant *Humiliation* before God thereon, and an equally conſtant *Application* of it ſelf unto the *Lord Chriſt* for Grace and Mercy; and it is *wholly in vain* to think of fixing any other Bounds unto the *progreſs* of *Sin*. The Ignorance hereof is that which hath produced in ſome the proud Imagination of *Perfection*, where they are far enough from bringing their Conſciences and Lives to the *Rule* of the *Goſpel*, but onely aggravate their Guilt by attempting to bend that *inflexible Rule* unto their own perverſe and *crooked Minds*.

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Secondly; In this Caſe, *carnal Intereſt*, which takes in and comprizeth all the *Circumſtances* of Men, calls for an *Indulgence* unto ſome *one Sin* or other, which the *Goſpel* will not admit of. Pride and Ambition, Covetouſneſs or Love of this preſent evil World, and the periſhing things of it, Uncleanneſs or Senſuality in Eating, Drinking; Self-exaltation and Boaſting, Vain-glory, Idleneſs, one or other muſt be ſpared. One thing (I ſay) or other on the Account of *carnal Intereſt*, either becauſe *ſmall*, or *uſeful*, or *general*, or ſuited unto a *Natural Temper*, or as is ſuppoſed made *neceſſary* by the Occaſions of Life, muſt be reſerved. Where this Reſolution prevails, as men are abſolutely excluded from any real Intereſt in *Goſpel-Holineſs*, which will admit of no ſuch Reſerves, ſo it will not fail to lead them into open *Apoſtaſie* of one kind or another. For,

(1) Such Perſons are *unapproved of God* in *all that they doe*, and ſo have no Ground for Expectation of his Bleſſing or Aſſiſtance. For the Allowance of the leaſt Sin, is ſuch an Impeachment of *Sincerity*, as caſteth a man out of the compaſs of *Covenant-Communion* with God. This is that *offending in One point* which ruines a mans Obedience,

ence, and renders him Guilty againſt the *whole Law*; *Jam.* 2. 10. Any one *actual Sin* makes a man guilty of the Curſe of the *whole Law*, as it contains the Covenant of Works; and the willing Allowance of a mans ſelf in any one Sin *habitually*, breaks the *whole Law* as it contains the Rule of our Obedience in the Covenant of Grace. And if in this *diſapproved Condition* men meet with outward Proſperity in the World, their Danger will be encreaſed, as well as their Guilt aggravated. And the utmoſt Care of Profeſſors is required in this matter. For there ſeems to be among many an open Indulgence unto *habitual* Diſorders; which hazards their whole *Covenant-Intereſt*, and muſt fill them with Uncertainty in their own Minds. High time it is for all ſuch Perſons to ſhake off every weight, and the ſin *that doth ſo eaſily beſet* them, and to run with re-doubled Diligence the remainder of the Race that is ſet before them.

(2) This *Indulgence unto any one Sin*, will make way in the Minds, Conſciences and Affections of men for the Admiſſion of *other Sins* alſo: It will be like *a Thief* that is hidden in an Houſe, and onely waits an Opportunity to open the Doors unto his other Com-

Companions; To this end he watcheth for a Seaſon of *ſleep* and *darkneſs*, when there is none to obſerve his Actings. Let a Perſon who thus alloweth himſelf to live in *any ſin*, fall into Temptation whileſt he is a little more than ordinary careleſs, his *allowed Corruption* ſhall open his Heart unto any other Sin that offers for Admiſſion. *Look not* (ſaith the Wiſe-man) *upon the Wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the Cup, when it moveth it ſelf aright; Thine Eyes ſhall behold ſtrange Women, and thine Heart ſhall utter perverſe things*; Prov. 23. 31, 33. One Sin liked and loved, will make way for any other. There is a Kindred and Alliance between Sins of all ſorts, and they agree in the ſame End and Deſign. Where any one is *willingly* entertained, others will intrude themſelves beyond all our Power of Reſiſtance.

(3) It will *divert the Soul* from the *Uſe* of *thoſe Means* whereby all other Sins ſhould be *reſiſted*, and thereby *Apoſtaſie* be *prevented*. For, there is no Means appointed or ſanctified by God for the Reſiſtance or Mortification of Sin, but it oppoſeth *Sin as Sin*, and conſequently every thing that is ſo, and that *becauſe* it is ſo. Wherefore, whoever *willingly* reſerves any one Sin from the

the Efficacy of the Means God hath appointed for its Mortification, doth equally reſerve *all.* And as thoſe Means do loſe their Power and Efficacy towards ſuch Perſons, ſo they will inſenſibly fall off from a Conſcientious Attendance unto any of thoſe Ways and Duties whereby Sin ſhould be *oppoſed* and *ruined.*

Thirdly, Many of thoſe *Graces* in whoſe Exerciſe this *Evangelical Holineſs* doth principally conſiſt, are ſuch as are *of no Reputation* in the World. The greateſt Moraliſts that ever were, whether *Phariſees* or *Philoſophers*, could never ſeparate between their *Love* and *Practice* of Vertue on the one hand, and their own *Honour*, *Glory* and *Reputation* on the other. There was in them, as the *Poet* expreſſeth it in one Inſtance,

—*Amor Patriæ, laudumq; immenſa cupido.*

Hence they alwayes eſteemed thoſe Virtues the moſt Excellent which had the beſt *Acceptation* and the greateſt Vogue of Prayſe among Men. And it ſeems to be ingrafted in the *Nature* of Man, to have ſome kind of Deſire to be *approved* in what men judge themſelves to do well and Laudably. Neither is this Deſire ſo evil in it ſelf, but that it may be mannaged in ſubordination

unto the Glory of God, which nothing that is abſolutely Evil or in its own Nature, on any Conſiderations or Circumſtances can be. But when at any time it ſwells into an Exceſs, and the *Phariſaical* Leaven of *being ſeen and prayſed* of men, puffeth it up, it is the worſt Poyſon that the Mind can be infected withall. In what degree ſoever it be admitted, in the ſame it *alienates* the Mind from *Goſpel-Holineſs*. And it doth ſo Effectually, I mean this *Self-love*, and love of the Prayſe of *others* doth ſo, on the Reaſon mentioned; namely, that the Graces in whoſe Exerciſe it doth principally conſiſt, are of *no Reputation* in the World. Such are, Meekneſs, Gentleneſs, Self-denyal, Poverty of Spirit, Mourning for Sin, hungring and thirſting after Righteouſneſs, Mercy and Compaſſion, Purity of Heart, Openneſs and Simplicity of Spirit, Readineſs to undergoe and forgive Injuries, Zeal for God, Contempt of the World, Fear of Sin, Dread of Gods Judgement for Sin; and the like. Theſe are thoſe *Adornings of the Inner man of the Heart which with God are of great price.* But as unto their *Reputation* in the World, *Weakneſſe, Softneſſe of* Nature, *Superſtitious Folly, Madneſs, Hypocritical Preciſeneſs*, is the beſt Meaſure

Measure they meet withall. When men begin to discern, that as unto this *Holiness* of the Gospel, its principal work lyes *within doors*, in the Heart and Mind, in the things that no Mortal Eye seeth, and few commend so much as in the Notion of them, and which in their outward Exercise meet with no good Entertainment in the World, they betake themselves unto and rest in those Duties which make a *better Appearance*, and meet with *better Acceptance*. And many of them are such as in their proper place are *diligently* to be attended unto, provided they draw not off the Mind from an Attendance unto those *despised Graces* and their Exercise, wherein the Life of true Holiness doth consist. And it is well if we are all sufficiently aware of the Deceits of Sathan in this Matter. In the Beginnings of the General *Apostasie* from the *Power* and *Purity* of Christian Religion, to countenance all sorts of Persons in a Neglect of the *principal Graces* of the Gospel, the *Necessity of Regeneration* and an Heavenly Principle of *spiritual Life*, they were put wholly on Outward *splendid Works* of Piety and Charity, as they were esteemed. Let their Minds be defiled, their Lusts unmortified, their Hearts unhumbled, their

whole Souls unfurniſhed of ſpiritual and heavenly Graces, yet (as they would have it,) theſe outward Works ſhould aſſuredly bring them all unto a bleſſed Immortality and Glory. But this *face of the Covering*, this Vail that was ſpread over many Nations, being now in many places (particularly among Us) *rent and deſtroyed*, both Wiſdom and much Circumſpection are required, that neither under a Pretence, nor under a real Endeavour after the inward *ſpiritual Graces* of Chriſt and their due Exerciſe, we do not countenance our ſelves in the Neglect of thoſe *outward Duties* which are any way uſefull unto the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind. Theſe are ſome of the Cauſes, and other there are of an alike Nature, from the powerfull Influence whereof upon their Minds, men have changed *Goſpel Holineſs* for *other Wayes* of Obedience, which alſo they give other Names unto.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Apoſtaſie into Profaneneſs and Senſuality of Life; the Cauſes and Occaſions of it. Defects in Publick Teachers and Guides in Religion.

THat which yet remaineth to be conſidered under this Head of *Backſliding from the Commands of the Goſpel*, and the Obedience required in them, is of a worſe Kind, and of a more pernicious Conſequence. And this is that open Apoſtaſie into *Profaneneſs and Senſuality of Life*, which the Generality of them who are called *Chriſtians* are in moſt places of the World viſibly fallen into. If any be otherwiſe minded, if they ſuppoſe and judge that the Wayes and Walkings of the Generality of *Churches* and individual Chriſtians, of whole Nations that profeſs themſelves to be ſo, are ſuch as the Goſpel requireth and approveth of, they ſeem either to be ignorant of the *true ſtate* of theſe

things in the World, or to be highly injurious unto the Grace and Truth which came by Jeſus Chriſt. To ſuppoſe that he by his Goſpel giveth Countenance unto, or conniveth at, that Darkneſs, Profaneneſs, Senſuality, thoſe bloody Contentions and Oppreſſions; in a word, all thoſe filthy and noxious Luſts which at this day have overwhelmed the Chriſtian World, doth what he can to render and repreſent it, not onely *uſeleſs*, but extremely *pernitious* unto Mankind. For they do ſay therein, That by *him* and *his Doctrine* Countenance is given unto that Degeneracy in Wickedneſs, which *Heatheniſme* would not allow, whereby the World is filled with Confuſion, and in danger to be precipitated into Ruine. I ſhall therefore at preſent take it for granted, (with the higheſt Readineſs to give up that Conceſſion when any tolerable Evidence ſhall be given to the contrary,) that there is among and in the *Churches* whereunto the *generality* of *Chriſtians* do reckon themſelves to belong, a *viſible Apoſtaſie* from that Piety, Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, which the Goſpel indiſpenſably requireth in all the Diſciples of Chriſt, and which the Primitive Chriſtians did Earneſtly follow and Eminently abound

abound in. An Enquiry into the Means and Cauſes hereof, is that which now lyes before us. And that eſpecial Inſtance which I ſhall alwayes regard, is the Church of *Rome*, which as it hath given the moſt eminent Example of *Apoſtaſie* in this Kind of any Church in the World; ſo whatever of the ſame Nature befalleth others, it is ſufficiently repreſented therein.

The immediate *internal* Cauſes, (which are, as the Riſe and Original of all Sins, ſo of thoſe wherein this *Apoſtaſie* doth conſiſt, becauſe they are not peculiar hereunto, but equally reſpect all ſins at all times,) belong not unto our preſent Enquiry. By theſe Cauſes I intend in *general*, the Depravation of Nature, the Power and Deceitfulneſs of Sin, Love of the World, the Profits, Honours and Pleaſures of it, the Rage of the Fleſh after the ſatisfaction of its ſenſual Luſts, with the Averſation of the Minds of Men from things Spiritual and Heavenly, as being *alienated from the Life of God*, through the Darkneſs and *Ignorance that is in them*. For, theſe and the like depraved Affections being excited and acted by the crafty Influences of Sathan, and inflamed with Temptations, do incline, induce and carry men into all manner of

Wickedneſs with *delight* and *greedineſs*; *Jam.* 1. 14, 15. But whereas all theſe things in General reſpect equally *all Times*, *Occaſions*, and *Sins*, and whereas it is the conſtant Work of the *Miniſters* of the Goſpel (thoſe I mean, who underſtand their Employment, with the Account they muſt give of the Souls committed unto their Charge) to diſcover the Nature, detect the Deceit, and warn men of the Danger of theſe Principles and Occaſions of Sin *within* them and *without* them; I ſhall not need particularly here to inſiſt upon them. It is the more publick *external* Means and Cauſes which have produced, furthered and promoted the Apoſtaſie complained of, that we ſhall take under Conſideration.

The firſt *Occaſion* hereof in all Ages hath been given by, or taken from the *publick Teachers*, *Guides* or Leaders of the People in the Matter of Religion. I intend them of all ſorts, however called, ſtyled, or diſtinguiſhed, into what Forms or Orders ſoever they are caſt by themſelves or others. And I name them ſo at large, becauſe it is known how variouſly they are multiplyed, eſpecially in the Church of *Rome*, where (as to theſe parts of the World,) this Apoſtaſie began, and by which it is principally pro-

promoted, and that by all ſorts of them. Theſe at all times have and muſt have an eſpecial Influence into the *Holineſs* or *Unholineſs* of the People; yea, the Purity or Apoſtaſie of the Church, as to *outward Means*, doth principally depend upon them, with the diſcharge of their Office and Duty. In many things they ſucceed into the Room of the Prieſts of Old, and frequently fall under the Command and Rebuke given unto them; *Mal.* 2. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; *O ye Prieſts, this Commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give Glory unto my Name, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, I will even ſend a Curſe upon you, and will curſe your Bleſſings: Yea, I have curſed them already, becauſe you do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your ſeed, and ſpread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your ſolemn Feaſts, and one ſhall take you away with it. And ye ſhall know that I have ſent this Commandment unto you, that my Covenant might be with Levi, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. My Covenant was with him of Life and Peace, and I gave them to him for the Fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my Name. The Law of Truth was in his mouth, and Iniquity was not found in his lips: He walked*

walked with me in Peace and Equity, and did turn many away from Iniquity. For the Prieſts lips ſhould keep Knowledge, and they ſhould ſeek the Law at his mouth: For he is the Meſſenger of the Lord of Hoſts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have cauſed many to ſtumble at the Law: Ye have corrupted the Covenant of Levi, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts. Therefore have I alſo made you contemptible and baſe before all the People, according as ye have not kept my wayes, but have been partial in the Law.

That holy, humble, laborious *Miniſtry*, which Chriſt firſt inſtituted in the Church, was the great Means of Converting Men unto *Evangelical Obedience*, and the Preſerving of them therein. This, their Doctrine, their Spirit, their Example, their Manner and Courſe of Life, their Prayers, Preaching, and entire Endeavour tended unto, and were bleſſed and proſpered of God unto that purpoſe; Then were the Lives of Chriſtians a *Tranſcript* of the Truth of the Goſpel. But through the Degeneracy of the following Ages, thoſe who ſucceeded them became Troubled *Fountains*, polluting and corrupting all the *Streams* of Chriſtian Religion. It is no uneaſie thing to obſerve, in the Courſe of

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Eccleſiaſtical Records and Stories, how by various degrees the Leaders of the Church became *corrupt*, and did corrupt the People, giving them in themſelves an Example of Striſes, Diviſions, Ambition, Worldly-mindedneſs; and by their Negligence in Diſcharge of their Duty depriving them of the Means of being made better, by the Power of the Doctrine, and Commands of the Goſpel. Under the Old Teſtament the Prieſts and Prophets led the People into a double *Apoſtaſie*. Firſt into that of *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*; *Jer.* 23. 15. And this continued prevailing among them, untill their Sin iſſued in a deſolating Calamity. This was the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, wherein all their *Idols* were buried in the Land of *Shinar*; *Zach.* 5. 11. After the Return of the People from thence, when they would no more be inveigled into *Idolatry*, whereof God deſigned that Captivity for an effectual Cure, the ſame ſort of Perſons by Negligence, Ignorance, and their evil Example in Profaneneſs, turned them off from God and his Law. This was begun in the dayes of *Malachi* the laſt of the Prophets, and ended in the *total Apoſtaſie* and *Deſtruction* of that Church and People. And when the whole came unto

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its laſt Iſſue in the Rejection of the Lord Chriſt the Son of God; the ſame ſort of Perſons, even the *Guides* and *Teachers* led and even forced the Body of the People into that great Rebellion and Impenitency therein, as is evidently declared in the Goſpel. And it is to be feared that ſomething of the like Nature hath fallen out among Chriſtians alſo: The firſt Apoſtaſie the Chriſtian World fell into, was by *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*, principally under the Conduct of the Church of *Rome*. And this (as it will alwayes be) was accompanyed with Wickedneſs of Life in all ſorts of Perſons. Many Churches and Nations being delivered from this Abomination, it is well if (by the ſame means) they are not falling into that of a worldly ſenſual prophane *Converſation*.

The Scripture is ſo full on this Subject, and the Nature of the thing it ſelf is ſuch, as ſeems to require a deep and thorough Conſideration of it. But the Nature of *my Deſign* will not admit of Enlargements on any particular Head, for I intend onely to point at the chief Springs and Occaſions of this Evil; and accordingly this part of our Subject muſt be onely briefly (as that preceding) treated on.

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What was before aſſerted in general, namely, That the *Well-being of the Church depends on the right diſcharge of the Office of the Miniſtry*, will I ſuppoſe be acknowledged by all; and it is plainly declared by the Apoſtle; *Epheſ.* 4. 12, 13, 14, 15. In proportion thereunto it will thrive or decay. The Nature of this *Office*, the Ends of its Inſtitution, the Works and Duties of it, with the univerſal Experience of all Ages and Places, do evince this Obſervation beyond all Contradiction. If therefore thoſe who undertake the Exerciſe of this *Office* do eminently and notoriouſly fail in the Performance and Diſcharge of the Duties thereof, eſpecially if they do ſo *generally*, and in any *long ſucceſſion* of time, it cannot be but that the People will be corrupt, and degenerate from the Rule of the Goſpel. The *Flocks* will not be preſerved where the *Shepheards* are negligent; and Fields will be over-run with Weeds, Thorns and Briars, if they be not duely tilled. I ſhall therefore in the Firſt place call over ſome of thoſe things which are indiſpenſably required in and of the *Miniſters* and *Teachers* of the Church, that it may be preſerved in its Purity, and kept up unto its Duty in Evangelical Obedience. And I

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ſhall inſiſt onely on thoſe which all men will acknowledge to be *ſuch Duties*, or which none who own the Goſpel can or dare deny ſo to be.

Firſt, It is required of them that they keep *pure and uncorrupted* the *Doctrine* of the *Goſpel*, eſpecially that concerning the *Holineſs* enjoyned in it, both as to its *Nature*, *Cauſes*, *Motives* and *Ends*. So of Old, the *Prieſts lips* were to preſerve *Knowledge*, and the People were to *ſeek the Law at his mouth*. This was one main End for which the Lord Chriſt gave unto, and inſtituted the Office of the Miniſtry in the Church. *Epheſ.* 4. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. *And he gave ſome Apoſtles; and ſome Prophets; and ſome Evangeliſts; and ſome Paſtors and Teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt: Till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect Man, unto the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt: That we henceforth be no more Children, toſſed to and fro, and carryed about with every wind of Doctrine, by the ſleight of Men, and cunning craftineſs whereby they lye in wait to deceive: But ſpeaking the Truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head,*

Head, even Chriſt. The Preſervation of the Truth, the Declaration, Vindication and Defence of it, ſo as the Members of the Church, the Diſciples of Chriſt committed to their Charge, be neither through Weakneſs or Ignorance as *Children*, nor thorough the Deluſions of Seducers *turned off from it*, or be unſettled in it, was one great End why the Lord Chriſt inſtituted this Office therein. And upon their Diſcharge of this Duty depends the Growth, the Obedience, the Edification and Salvation of the whole Body. And therefore doth the Apoſtle give this principally in Charge unto the *Elders* of the Church of *Epheſus*, in his ſolemn giving of it up unto their Care and Inſpection, when he himſelf was no more to come among them; *Act.* 20. 28,30. *Take heed therefore unto your ſelves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghoſt hath made you Overſeers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchaſed with his own Blood. For I know this, that after my departing ſhall grievous Wolves enter in among you, not ſparing the Flock. Alſo of your own ſelves ſhal men ariſe, ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away diſciples after them.* As he hath a regard unto other things, ſo in an eſpecial manner to the In-

Introduction of perverſe and *corrupt Opinions*, contrary to the Truth wherein they had been inſtructed by him, which comprized the whole *Counſel of God* concerning their *Faith* and *Obedience*, with his own *Worſhip*; ver. 27. This they were to do, by their carefull, faithfull, diligent Declaration, Vindication and Defence of the Doctrine which they had received. Eſpecially doth he preſs this upon his beloved *Timothy*. He being for a ſeaſon fixed in the Miniſtry of the Church, he was choſen out by the Wiſdom of the Holy Ghoſt to be a Pattern and *Example* in the Inſtructions given unto him, unto all Miniſters of the Goſpel in ſucceeding Generations. This Charge is expreſſely committed unto him; 1 *Tim.* 6. 13, 14. *I give thee charge, in the ſight of God who quickeneth all things, and before Chriſt Jeſus who before Pontius Pilate witneſſed a good Confeſſion; That thou keep this Commandment without ſpot, unrebukeable, till the appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; Ver. 20. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy truſt, avoiding prophane and vain Bablings, and Oppoſitions of Science falſely ſo called.* 2 Tim. 1. 13, 14. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithfull, he cannot deny himſelf. Of theſe things*

things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord, that they ſtrive not about words to no profit, but to the ſubverting of the Hearers. And what he was enjoyn'd in his own Perſon, that alſo he was directed to *commit unto others* with the ſame Charge, that the Truth of the Goſpel might be preſerved incorrupt in ſucceeding Generations, 2 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2. *Thou therefore, my Son, be ſtrong in the Grace that is in Chriſt Jeſus. And the things thou haſt heard of me among many Witneſſes, the ſame commit thou to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo.* The *vehemency* of the Apoſtle in this Charge, and his *patketical* Exhortations do ſufficiently evince the Moment and Neceſſity of this Duty, as that without which the Church would not be continued to *be the Ground and Pillar of Truth.*

There are Three *Repoſitories* of Sacred Truth, or of the Truths of the Myſtery of the Goſpel; The *Scripture*, the *Minds* and *Hearts* of *Believers*, and the *Miniſtry* of the preſent Age. In the firſt God preſerveth them by his *Providence*, in the ſecond by his *Spirit* and *Grace*, in the laſt by way of an *Ordinance* or eſpecial Inſtitution for that End.

In the firſt Way they have been kept and ſhall be kept ſafe againſt all Oppoſitions of *Hell* and the *World*, unto the Conſummation of all things. And if this way might fail, we acknowledge that the others would doe ſo alſo, whatever ſome pretend of their *Traditions* and others of their preſent *Inſpirations*. And whileſt this doth abide (as it ſhall alwayes doe,) the loſs that may befall in the other wayes may be retrived. And ſo it hath been ſeveral times, when the Faith of the Church hath been *recovered*, and its Profeſſion *reformed* by the Light and Knowledge derived afreſh from the *Scripture*. This *Fountain* therefore of Truth ſhall never be dry, but men may alwayes draw ſufficiently, yea abundantly from it, whileſt they uſe the Means appointed thereunto. But yet this alone will not ſecure the *publick Intereſt* of Truth and Holineſs. There muſt be other Means alſo of Communicating what is contained therein unto the Minds and Conſciences of men. And the Scripture it ſelf doth both appoint and require a *Miniſtry* unto this End. Secondly, There may be a Preſervation of the Truth derived from the Scripture for a ſeaſon in the *Minds of Men and Hearts of* private *Believers*. So was it in the

the dayes of *Elijah*, when in a deſtitution of all outward Miniſtry *ſeven thouſand* were preſerved in Faith and the Fear of God, *not bowing the Knee unto Baal*, 1 *King.* 19. 18. This the Holy Ghoſt is in eſpecial manner promiſed and given unto them to to effect; *Joh.* 14. 16, 17, 26. *Chap.* 16. 13. 1 *Joh.* 2. 20, 21. For herein is the Promiſe accompliſhed, that *they ſhall be all taught of God*; *Joh.* 6. 45. which though it be not wholly without Means, yet it is ſuch as doth not alwayes and in all things indiſpenſably depend thereon, *Heb.* 8. 11. And unto this Work of the Spirit, preſerving the Truth in the Minds and Hearts of true Believers, the Continuance of it in the World as to its *Power* and *Profeſſion* under great and general *Apoſtaſies*, is to be aſcribed. So I no way doubt but that during and under the *Papal* Defection, there were great Numbers in whoſe Hearts and Minds the principal Truths of the Goſpel were preſerved inviolate, ſo as that by virtue of them they lived unto God and were accepted with him. But this way of the Preſervation of the Truth is confined unto *individual Perſons*, and as ſuch onely are they concerned therein. As unto *publick Profeſſion* and the Benefits thereof, all Sa-

cred Truth is committed unto the *Miniſtry* of the preſent Age, and on the due Diſcharge of their Office and Work it doth depend. The Imagination of the Church of *Rome* about keeping Sacred Truths in the hidden *Cells* of *Tradition*, or inviſible *phantaſtical* Treaſures, which requires neither Care nor Wiſdom nor Honeſty unto its Cuſtody, but a meer pretence of *Key* to open it, was one Engine whereby both *Truth* and *Holineſs* were driven out of the World.

Theſe things are inſeparable. *Goſpel-Truth* is the onely Root whereon *Goſpel-Holineſs* will grow. If any Worm corrode, or any other corrupting Accident befall it, the Fruit will quickly fade and decay. It is impoſſible to maintain the *power* of *Godlineſs*, where the *Doctrine* from whence it ſprings is unknown, corrupted or deſpiſed. And on the other ſide, where men are weary of *Holineſs*, they will not long give Entertainment to the *Truth*. For as to their Deſires and Affections, they will find it not onely *uſeleſs* but *troubleſome*. Hence the *great Oppoſition* which is made at this day againſt many important Truths of the Goſpel, ariſeth principally from the Diſlike men have of the *Holineſs* which they guide unto, and require. Se-

Secondly, It is required of the ſame Perſons, that they diligently *inſtruct the People* in the Knowledge of the *whole Counſel of God*, in the *Myſtery* of the Goſpel, the *Doctrine* of Truth, that they may know and doe the Will of God. And this are they to doe by all the *Means* and *Wayes* that God hath *appointed*, preſſing it inſtantly, together with Inſtructions on their Souls and Conſciences for its practice. The End why *Evangelical Truth* is committed unto their Care, is not that they may keep it to themſelves, ſo *locking up the Key of Knowledge*, but that they may communicate it unto others and inſtruct them therein. And he who doth not deſire and endeavour to communicate unto his Flock *all things that are profitable for them*, can have no Evidence in his own Mind that God hath called him to the Office of the *Miniſtry*. The Apoſtle propoſing his own Example unto the *Elders* of the Church of *Epheſus*, affirms, That he had *not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole Counſel of God*; Act. 20. 27. And that he *kept back nothing that was profitable unto them*; ver. 20. Men begin to *talk* or *write* about Preaching on this or that Subject: Some (they ſay,) preach *all about Chriſt and*

Grace, and Juſtification by the Imputation of Chriſts Righteouſneſs; and the like: But They preach about *Gods Attributes*, *Moral Duties*, *Obedience to Superiours*, and things of that Nature. But whether this Fancy have more *Folly* or *Malice* in it, is not eaſie to determine. It is like thoſe who make this Plea, do ſpeak truely as to their own Concernment. They preach of the things they expreſs *excluſively* unto the others which they meddle not with at all. For if they do teach them, then is the Oppoſition they fanſie between thoſe Wayes of Preaching altogether vain. But that others doe preach the things aſcribed unto them with a Neglect of thoſe other Doctrines which ſuch Perſons pretend to appropriate to themſelves as their Province, is a fond Imagination; and to encreaſe the Vanity of it, the Diſtribution is made by ſome with a *total Silence* on all hands, both on their *own* which they *extoll*, and that of *others* which they *condemn*, of that which certainly ought to be the principal Subject of all Preaching, namely, *Jeſus Chriſt and him crucifyed*. But the Truth is, he who knows not that it is his Duty to declare unto the People, not this or that part of it, but the *whole Counſel of God*, and who is not

not endowed with ſome meaſure of *Wiſdom*, ſo as to diſcern what is *uſefull*, *profitable* and *ſeaſonable* unto his Hearers, according as their ſpiritual States and Occaſions do require; knows not what it is to be a Miniſter of Chriſt or his Goſpel, a *faithfull Steward* of the Myſteries of God, nor is meet to take that Office upon him. And there are three things which *Miniſters*, *Teachers*, *Leaders* of the People are to attend unto in the Diſcharge of this principal part of their Office, in the *Communication of the Knowledge of the Truth committed to them*, unto others.

1. That they are to do it with all *Care*, *Diligence* and *Sedulity*. How vehement is our Apoſtle in his Charge to this purpoſe. 2 *Tim.* 4. 1, 2. *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and the dead at his Appearing, and his Kingdom; Preach the Word, be inſtant in ſeaſon, out of ſeaſon; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all Long-ſuffering and Doctrine.* How ought theſe words to ſound continually in the Ears of all Miniſters who deſign to be Faithfull in the Diſcharge of their Duty? How ought the *power* of them to abide on their Hearts? Are they ſpoken alone unto *Timothy?* Or will the Souls of

Men be preſerved, edified, ſaved, *now* with leſs Pains, and at an eaſier Rate than *formerly?* It will appear at the laſt day, that *others* alſo have an Eternal Concernment herein.

2. That they labour with the *utmoſt* of their *ſtrength*, even to *Fatigation* and *Wearineſs*. All the Names whereby their Office and their Work are expreſſed in the *New Teſtament*, do include this kind of Labour. As they are to *give themſelves unto the Miniſtry of the Word*; *Act.* 6. 4. that is, *wholly and entirely* in their utmoſt Endeavours, continually unto this Work; ſo are they enjoyned κοπιᾶν, *to labour to the utmoſt of the ſtrength* they have, therein. 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. 1 *Cor.* 16. 16. 1 *Theſſ* 5. 12. It is not Bodily Labour alone in the Diſpenſation of the Word (wherein there may be much Variety according unto the various Natural Diſpoſitions or Tempers of men, and of acquired Gifts,) but that Earneſtneſs and Intention of Spirit which will carry along with them the laborious pains of the whole Perſon, that I intend. The cold *formal Pronunciation* or *Reading* (as is the manner of ſome) a *well-compoſed Oration* doth not well expreſs this *Labouring in the Word and Doctrine.*

3. That

3. That their *whole Work* and all their *Endeavours* therein be accompanyed with *conſtant Prayer*, that the *Goſpel* in their *Miniſtry* may *run and be glorified*, that the *Word* may proſper in the Hearts and Lives of the People. So the Apoſtle affirms that they would *give themſelves continually unto Prayer and the Miniſtry of the Word*; *Act.* 6. 4. That Miniſtration of the Word which is not accompanyed with *continual Prayer* for its Succeſs, is not like to have any great Bleſſing goe along with it. As our Apoſtle calls God to witneſs of his *frequent mention of them in his Prayers* unto whom the Word was Preached, *Rom.* 1. 9, 10; ſo he deſireth the Prayers of others alſo, that his Work and Labour in the Miniſtry might be proſperous and ſucceſſefull, *Eph.* 6. 18. For a Miniſter to Preach the Word without conſtant *Prayer* for its ſucceſs, is a likely Means to cheriſh and ſtrengthen ſecret *Atheiſme* in his own Heart, and very unlikely to work Holineſs in the Lives of others.

Thirdly, It is in like manner required of them, that (ſo far as Humane Frailty will permit,) they doe in their *Perſons*, *Wayes* and *Walkings*, or *Converſations*, eſpecially in the Diſcharge of all their *Miniſte-*

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rial Duties, give a true *Repreſentation* both of the *Doctrine* which they Preach, and of *Him* in whoſe Name they diſpenſe it. What Meekneſs, Humility, Zeal for the Glory of God; what Moderation, Self-denyal, and Readineſs for the Croſs; what Mortification of corrupt Affections and inordinate Deſires of Earthly things; what Contempt of the World; what Benignity, Condeſcenſion and Patience towards all men; what Evidences of Heavenly-mindedneſs are required hereunto, both the Scripture declares, and the Nature of the thing it ſelf makes apparent. What can any men Rationally believe, but that they who Preach *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel* unto them, do declare that they have no other Effect or Tendency but what in themſelves they expreſs and repreſent unto them? There is a ſecret Language in the Miniſtry of men, that what they *are* and *doe*, is that which the *Doctrine* they Preach doth require, which their Hearers do *underſtand*, and are apt to *believe*. The very Philoſophers ſaw that ſo it would be with reſpect unto them who publickly taught *Philoſophy*. To which purpoſe the words of *Therniſtius* are remarkable. *Orat.* 1. Ἀνελευθέρως τέ δὴ ἔν ὅπως ἐυρίσκοντες καὶ φιλοχρημάτως τὲ καὶ ἀρπαγας, λοιδόρως τὲ

τὲ καὶ φιλαπεχθήμονας καὶ ἀλαζόνας, δουλερὰς τὲ καὶ ἐπιβούλους, ἐκ διήκοντα ἐκ φύσεως ἢ τῆς πρώτερας βαναυσίας ἔχειν τὰς κῆρας, ἀλλ' ἀπάσαντας ἐκ φιλοσοφίας προσγίνεσθαι. Whatever Vices moſt men obſerve in ſuch Perſons, they will not attribute them unto their depraved Natures or inward Corruptions, but unto the *Philoſophy* they profeſs. Hence it is enjoyned them, that in *all things* they *ſhew themſelves patterns of good Works*. *Tit.* 2. 7. 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 9. *Be thou* (ſaith our Apoſtle unto his *Timothy*,) *an Example unto Believers, in Word, in Converſation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 12. This is the Dignity, Honour and Preferment that the Lord Chriſt calls his *Miniſters* unto, namely, that they ſhould in their own Perſons repreſent his *Graces* and the Holineſs of his *Doctrine*, unto others. Thoſe who are otherwiſe minded, whoſe Deſigns and Affections look another way, will find themſelves to fall under the Effects of a great Miſtake. I do not reflect any thing upon what *outward*, *ſecular*, *circumſtantial* Advantages men may have in this World: But I do ſay, whatever they have of that Kind, which doth not enable them the more effectually in their Courſe and Work to expreſs the *Meekneſs*, *Humility*, *Self-de-*

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nyal, and *Zeal* of Chriſt, with the *Holineſs* of the Doctrine they teach, or ſhould ſo doe, it will not redound unto any great Account in the Kingdom of God.

Fourthly; It is alſo incumbent on them to *attend* with Diligence unto that *Rule* and Holy *Diſcipline* which the *Lord Chriſt* hath appointed for the *Edification* of the Church, and the Preſervation of it in Purity, Holineſs and Obedience. This indeed moſt pretend a Readineſs to comply withall, as that which is condited unto their Appetite by an Appearance of Authority and Power, which ſeldom are unaccompanyed with other deſireable Advantages. I ſhall onely ſay, it will be well for them by whom they are Adminiſtred according to the mind of Chriſt; but, that more belongeth thereunto than is uſually apprehended ſo to doe, I ſuppoſe few ſober and intelligent Perſons will deny.

That theſe things, yea and many others of the like Kind, with all thoſe Duties which are ſubſervient or any way neceſſary unto them, are required of all *Miniſters* of the Goſpel, *Teachers*, *Guides*, *Rulers* of the Church, and that *conſtantly* to be attended unto with Zeal to the Glory of God and Compaſſion for the Souls of Men,

none

none (I ſuppoſe) who profeſs themſelves *Chriſtians* will in General deny. And if in theſe things the *Life* and *Power* of the Miniſtry (whereon the Purity and Holineſs of the Church depend) do conſiſt, where they are wanting it is Morally impoſſible but that the *generality of the People* will gradually degenerate into Ignorance, Profaneneſs, Immorality and Unholineſs of every Kind.

There is nothing I could more deſire, than that the preſent Defection from *Evangelical Holineſs* which is ſo Viſible in the World, might neither in *whole* nor in *part* be charged on a *Defect* in theſe things among this ſort of men; yea that it might not be ſo unto Qualifications, Principles, and Actings directly contrary unto what is thus required. For if it be not ſo, there will be yet hopes of a *Stay* to be put unto its Progreſs, yea of an *Healing* and *Recovery* from it. But I ſhall a little enquire into that which offers it ſelf unto the view of all, premiſing theſe two things. (1) That I do not intend the Miniſtry of any one *Place*, or *Nation*, or *Age*, or *Time* more than another, but ſhall ſpeak Indefinitely unto what hath been and is in the Chriſtian World. (2) That if indeed upon Trial

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none be found *blame-worthy*, none *defective* in theſe things, there is no Harm done, in that any are warned what to avoid. And,

1. Have they all *kept the Truth* and *Doctrine* and *Myſteries* of the Goſpel, committed to the *Miniſters* thereof? (1) Are there not many of this ſort who are themſelves *wofully Ignorant of the Counſel of God* revealed therein? Nay, are there not many who have neither *Will* nor *Ability* to ſearch into the *Myſteries* of the *Doctrine* of Chriſt, and do therefore *deſpiſe* them? Can men keep in a way of Duty what they *never had*, nor ever uſed thoſe Means for the attaining of it, without which it will not be ſo done? And is it not manifeſt what muſt needs be, and what really are the Effects and Fruits hereof? Do not hereon Multitudes *periſh for want of Knowledge*, and continue in the wayes of Sin becauſe they have none to teach them better, at leaſt not to teach them on ſuch Principles as are alone effectual unto their Converſion and Holineſs? They muſt *dye*, they ſhall *dye in their Sins*, but the Blood of their Souls will be required at other hands. For all the Cauſes of *Goſpel-Holineſs*, all proper Motives unto it, all effectual Ways

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and Means of Attaining it are hid from them.

It is known how *brutiſhly Ignorant* the Generality of their Prieſts are in the *Papacy*; neither, for the moſt part, do the Rulers of that Church require any more of them, than that they have skill enough to *read* and manage their publick *Offices of Devotion*. Neither is it much otherwiſe in the *Greek* Church in any of the Branches of it, whereby whole Nations, under a publick Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, are thorough ſtupid Ignorance degenerated into a prophane Courſe of Life, no leſs vile than that of the *Heathens*. It is well if it be not ſo in ſome meaſure in other places alſo. But the Truth is, the *Ignorance* of many who take upon them the Office of the Miniſtry, and their *unconſcionable Idleneſs* when they have ſo done, is the great Occaſion of the Continuance of *Prophaneneſs* and *Vngodlineſs* among the People. And if the *Preaching of the Goſpel* be the onely Sovereign effectual Means appointed by God for the Change of Mens *Natures*, and the Reformation of their *Lives*, (a Denyal whereof includes a Renunciation of *Chriſtianity*,) it is a vain Expectation that either of them will be wrought in

in ſuch a way as to reſtore the *Beauty* and *Glory* of Religion in the World, unleſs Proviſion be made for an *able Miniſtry* to inſtruct the Body of the People through all their Diſtributions in Knowledge and Underſtanding.

2. It is the Duty of this ſort of Perſons unto the ſame End, to *preſerve the Truth pure and uncorrupted.* Unleſs this be done carefully and effectually, *Holineſs* will not be maintained or preſerved in the World. And it is evident how many of them have acquitted themſelves herein, as hath been in part declared in the foregoing Account of *Apoſtaſie* from the *Doctrine* and *Truth* of the Goſpel. By them it hath been, principally, *debaſed*, *corrupted*, *perverted*, and continueth yet ſo to be. Neither is there at this day ſcarce any one Doctrine that ſhould really promote *Evangelical Obedience*, which is free from being *deſpiſed* or *depraved* by ſome of them. But this is not that which we now ſpeak unto, it hath been done already. Our preſent Enquiry is after that *Love* and *Care* of, that *Zeal* for the Truth, which are eminently required of them. Do they *pray* and *labour*, and *plead* with God and Man for its Preſervation, as that wherein their *principal Intereſt*

Intereſt doth lye? Or do many eſteem of it any further but as their *outward* Advantages are ſecured by it? A *Fault* there is in this matter, and it is not without the eſpecial Guilt of ſome that the World is come to ſuch an *Indifferency* about the *principal Truths* of the Goſpel, that from thence men ſlip into *Atheiſme* every day.

3. Neither are theſe Defects ſupplyed by *Diligence* in their *Work*; Yea the *want* thereof is of all other Evils in this Kind moſt *evident*. No words are ſufficient to expreſs the *ſloth* and *negligence*, the *coldneſs* and *careleſneſs* that are found amongſt many in the Diſcharge of their Duty, as to the Inſtruction of others, and the *Application* of the Word of God to the Hearts and Conſciences of Men. I ſhall not mention *particular Inſtances*, that none may be offended. The *Matter* it ſelf is evident, and the *Effects* of it manifeſt. It may ſeem to ſome deſireable that ſuch things ſhould be concealed; but whileſt by reaſon hereof the *Souls* of Multitudes are in danger of *Eternal Ruine* every day, thoſe who are ſenſible of their *Miſery* may be allowed to complain. How few therefore do diligently and induſtriouſly lay out themſelves and their Strength in the Miniſtry with

Zeal for the Glory of God, and *Compaſſion* unto the Souls of Men? How few do take heed to themſelves and to the Flocks, do watch and pray, and preſs their Meſſage on the *Conſciences* of their Hearers? Alas! it is but *little* of ſaving *Truth* that many know in the *Notions* of it, *leſs* they care to communicate unto others, becauſe they know it not in its *power*. Will the *Souls* of Men be brought into the Obedience of Faith; will the *power* and *intereſt* of *Sin* and the *World* in them be caſt down and deſtroyed; will *Goſpel-Obedience* be preſerved in the *Lives* of Men by ſuch weak and Languid Endeavours as many ſatisfie themſelves withall? If it be ſo, *Converſion* unto God, and the *Fruits of Holineſs*, muſt be looked on as moſt eaſie things, and the *Miniſtry* it ſelf to be of little uſe in the World. Certainly, there is another Repreſentation of theſe things in the *Scripture*; And notwithſtanding the Growth of ſome Opinions that would render the whole work of *Chriſtianity* ſo eaſie and facile as to be accommodated unto a *negligent Miniſtry*, yet the Event thereof is openly pernicious. Wherefore, we need not fear to ſay, that *coldneſs*, *lukewarmneſs*, *ſloth* and *negligence*, eſpecially when accompanyed with

with *Ignorance* and ſpiritual *Darkneſs* about the principal *Myſteries* of the Goſpel, with an Inconcernment of *Mind* and *Affections* in the *Importance*, *End* and *Deſign* of their Work, among them who are looked on as the *publick Teachers* of the Church at any Time, or in any Place, keeps open a *wide Door* for the *Luſts* of men to pour forth themſelves into that Deluge of *Apoſtaſie* from the *Power* of Godlineſs, which the World is even overwhelmed withall.

So was it with the Church under the *Old Teſtament*, as God by the Prophets complains in an hundred places. Can any man be ſo ſtupid as to imagine, that the Ordinary Diſcharge of the *Prieſtly Office* in the *Church* of *Rome*, in ſaying their *Offices* at *Canonical* Hours, *hearing of Confeſſions*, and *giving Abſolutions*, without the leaſt Dram of *labouring in Word and Doctrine*, is a Means to keep up the *power* of *Chriſtian Religion*, or is not an Effectual Means to drench Mankind in Sin and Security? Neither doth the calling of things by other *Names*, change their *Natures*. Wherever there is the ſame Neglect of the true Work of the *Miniſtry*, in the *matter* of it, or *manner* of its Performance, the ſame Event will enſue thereon. And it

will be no where more *fatal* than where Men *love to have it ſo*, and *deſpiſe* whatever is ſpoken to the contrary, ſo as that it ſhall be eſteemed a *Crime* for any one to be diſſatisfied with the ſoul-ruining Sloth and Negligence of this ſort of Men.

4. Moreover, whereas great *Relief* in all theſe Caſes might be taken from an *holy exemplary Converſation* and walking, among them in whom it is required as an Ordinance of God for the *Direction* and *Encouragement* of the People, it is manifeſt in the World, and ſufficiently taken notice of, that many of them in their own Perſons are openly *ambitious*, inſatiably *covetous*, *proud*, *ſenſual*, *haters* of them that are Good, Companions of the *worſt* of men, evidencing the *depraved habits* of their Minds in all ſignal Inſtances of Vice and Folly. He that ſhall conſider what was the *ſtate*, what were the *Lives* of the Apoſtles and firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, with thoſe who ſucceeded them for ſome Ages following, not meerly as to their *outward* Condition of Straights and Poverty, (which as it will be pleaded, was occaſioned by the *ſtate* of things then in the World,) but as to that *Humility*, *Lowlineſs of Mind*, *Self-denyal*, *Contempt of the World*, *Zeal for God*, *Purity*

Purity of Life, which they preſcribed unto others, and gave an *Exemplification* of in themſelves; and then take a view of that *univerſal Contradiction* unto them and their *Wayes* which the *Lives* and Courſe of very many in the World do at this day openly expreſſe, he muſt conclude, that either all thoſe things were *needleſs* in them as to the publick Intereſts of *Chriſtianity*, or that they are unſpeakably *endammaged* by thoſe of ſome at preſent.

Wherefore it cannot with any Modeſty be denyed, but that by Reaſon of theſe and the like Miſcarriages in the *ſpiritual Guides* of the People, that the Generality of Chriſtians have been either led, or ſuffered inſenſibly to fall into the preſent *Apoſtaſie*. When God ſhall be pleaſed to give unto the People who are called by his Name, in a more abundant manner *Paſtors after his own Heart, to feed them with Knowledge and Underſtanding*, when he ſhall revive and increaſe an holy, humble, zealous, ſelf-denying, powerfull *Miniſtry*, by a more plentifull Effuſion of his Spirit from above, then and not untill then may we hope to ſee the *priſtine Glory* and Beauty of our Religion reſtored unto its *primitive* State and Condition.

Thoſe who do yet judge, that matters among the common Profeſſors of *Chriſtianity* as to the Obedience of *Faith*, are in as good a Poſture as they were at any time formerly, or as they need to be, who have no other Deſire or Intereſt in them, but onely that they ſhould not be better; may abide in their ſecurity without troubling themſelves with theſe things. But for ſuch as cannot but ſee that a *Revolt* or *Defection* from *Goſpel Obedience*, is not onely begun in the World, but carried unto that height that it is ready to iſſue in *Idolatry* or *Atheiſme*, it is time for them to conſider under whoſe hand this hath fallen out, and be ſtirred up to put a ſtop unto its progreſs, before it be too late. Nor is it to be expected or fanſied that there will be a *Recovery* of the People from *ungodlineſs* and *Prophaneneſs*, or unto the *holy Obedience* the *Goſpel* requireth, untill there be ſuch a Change wrought in the *Miniſtry*, that the *Word* may be ſo diſpenſed, and ſuch *Examples* given, as may be effectual unto that End. It is to caſt the higheſt Contempt on the *Office* it ſelf, to imagine that this *Breach* can be otherwiſe healed. For whereas this Declenſion is fallen out under the Conduct of the *preſent Miniſtry* and

and that of the *fore-going Ages*, it is not to be thought that it will be retrived under the ſame Conduct; and to ſuppoſe that it can be done any other Way, that the World of profeſſed *Chriſtians* ſhall be recovered unto *holy Obedience* by any other Means but the *Miniſterial Diſpenſation* of the *Word*, is to render it a thing altogether *uſeleſs*. Here then muſt begin the Cure of that Lethargy in *Sin* that the World is fallen into, namely, in the Renovation of a powerfull *Evangelical Miniſtry*, or the due Diſcharge of that Office by them that are *called* thereunto, or poſſeſs the *place* of it, if ever it be effected unto any purpoſe in this World.

CHAP. X.

Other Cauſes and Occaſions of the Decay of Holineſs.

SEcondly; Multitudes are led into, and countenanced in the wayes of *Sin* and *Prophaneneſs*, freely indulging unto their Luſts and corrupt Affections; by a *falſe appropriation of juſtifying Names and Titles unto them, in wayes of Sin and Wickedneſs.* This was one principal Means of Old whereby the *Jews* were hardned in their *Impieties* and *flagitious Lives.* For when the Prophets told them of their *Sins*, and warned them of Gods approaching Judgements, they oppoſed that Out-cry unto their whole Miniſtry, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord are theſe*; Say what you pleaſe, we are the onely Poſterity of *Abraham*, the onely Church of God in the World. This Conteſt they mannaged with the Prophet *Jeremiah* in an eſpecial manner;

Chap.

Chap. 7. he ſaith unto them in the Name of the Lord, *Amend your wayes and your doings, and I will cauſe you to dwell in this place,* ver. 3. their Reply and Defence is, *The Temple of the Lord,* &c. *ver.* 4. Whereunto the Prophet makes that ſevere Return, *ver.* 9, 10. *Will ye ſteal, murder and commit Adultery, and ſwear falſely, and burn Incenſe to Baal, and walk after other Gods whom you know not, and come and ſtand before me in this Houſe which is called by my Name?* Will you give up your ſelves unto all manner of *wickedneſs*, and countenance your ſelves therein by being a People unto whom the *Temple* and the *Worſhip* of it is appropriated? And this in like manner was the great Prejudice which the *Baptiſt* had to contend withall when he came to call them to Repentance. *Abrahams* Children they were, and by vertue of that Relation had Right unto all the Priviledges of the Covenant made with him, whatever they were in themſelves, *Matth.* 3. 9. And it is evident in theſe Examples, that the nearer Churches or Perſons are unto an utter Forfeiture of all their *Priviledges*, and *Deſtruction* it ſelf for their Sins, the more ready they are to boaſt of and ſupport themſelves with their *outward ſtate*, as having

ving nothing elſe to truſt unto. But if Men were able to countenance themſelves in their Sins on this pretenſe againſt that Extraordinary *Prophetical Miniſtry* which endeavoured to diſcard them of it, and called them unto the Neceſſity of *Perſonal Holineſs*; how much more will they be able to ſhelter themſelves under its ſhades, when they ſhall be *taught* ſo to doe?

When Men who have given up themſelves unto a vitious, ſenſual, worldly Courſe of Life, having either fallen into it by the Power of their *Luſts* and *Temptations*, or were never brought into a better Courſe by any Means of correcting the Vices of *Nature*, ſhall find, that notwithſtanding what they are, what they know themſelves to be, and what Judgement others muſt needs paſs of them, yet that they are eſteemed to *belong to the Church of Chriſt*, and are made partakers of all outward Priviledges of it, it cannot but greatly heighten their *ſecurity* in Sin, and weaken the *Efficacy* of all Means of their Reformation. And when others, not ſo engaged in the wayes of Sin and Prophaneneſs, ſhall ſee that they may have all *external Pledges of Divine Love* and Favour communicated unto them, although they ſhould

ſhould run into the ſame compaſs of Riot and Exceſs with others, it cannot but inſenſibly weaken their *Diligence* in Duty, and render them more pliable Subjects of *Temptations* unto Sin. For they are but *few* who care to be *better* than they judge they muſt be of *Neceſſity*. When the Church of *Sardis* was really *dead*, the principal Means of keeping it in that Condition, was the *Name* it had to be *alive*.

Let us therefore conſider, how it hath been in the World in this Matter. Whileſt theſe things have been communicated promiſcuouſly unto all ſorts of Men, yea to the *worſt* that live on the Earth, is it not evident that the Name of the *Church*, and the Adminiſtration of its Ordinances would be made uſe of to countenance Men in a Neglect of *Holineſs*, yea a *Contempt* and *Hatred* of it. Whileſt theſe Sacred Names, Titles and Priviledges, theſe Pledges of the *Love* of God, and of all the *Benefits* of the *Mediation* of Chriſt are forced to Lacquey after Men into the moſt *provoking Courſes* of flagitious *Sins*, what can put a ſtay to the Luſts of Men? If the Church be that *Society* in the World which is alone the Object of Gods *eſpecial Love* and *Grace*, if the *principal End* of the Adminiſtration of

of its Ordinances be to Confirm unto Men their Intereſt in the *Benefits* of the *Mediation* of Chriſt, how can the Luſts of Men be more accommodated than by the *Application* of theſe things unto them, whileſt they are *flagrant* in their purſuit? It may indeed be ſuppoſed, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath made *Evangelical Obedience* to be the immoveable *Rule* of an *Intereſt* in his Church; Indeed, whether Obedience unto the *Precepts of the Goſpel* be not the onely and indiſpenſable *Condition* of a Participation of the *Priviledges* of the Goſpel, ought to be out of Diſpute with them that own the *Truth* of its Doctrine. And whereas all that is required of us that we may be Eternally *ſaved*, is contained in the *Precepts of the Goſpel*, men can have no other *outward ſecurity* of their Souls welfare, than what doth accompany the *Church* and its Rights. When therefore they do find on what eaſie terms they may hold an *undefeaſible Intereſt* in them, ſo as that by a Complyance with ſome *outward Forms* or Conſtitutions, they may ſecure their Right from any Impeachment or Forfeiture by the moſt *profligate Courſe* of Life which for the Satisfaction of their Luſts they can betake themſelves unto, what remains

mains of *outward Means* that can put a Reſtraint upon them?

This was the *Engine* whereby Sathan promoted that General Apoſtaſie from *Evangelical Obedience* which befell the *Church of Rome*, in all its Branches, Members and Adherents. For, after that innumerable Multitudes were brought into the *Profeſſion of Chriſtianity*, not through a Conviction and Experience of its *Truth*, *Power*, *Holineſs*, and *Neceſſity* unto the preſent Peace and eternal Welfare of the Souls of Men; but in Complyance with the *Rulers* of the Nations and their own *Secular Intereſt*, being once ſafely lodged (on moſt eaſie and gentle terms) in the Church, they were quickly ſecured from all Apprehenſions of the *Neceſſity* of that *Holineſs* which the Goſpel doth require. For being aſſured, that although their *Lives* were worſe than thoſe of the *Heathen*, were they never ſo lewd, filthy and wicked, did all manner of Sins that may be named, or ought to be named, abound among them; yet that *they*, and *they alone* were the *Church* of Chriſt, and could not be otherwiſe, to what purpoſe ſhould they trouble themſelves with *Mortification*, *Self-denyal*, *Purity of Heart* and *Hands*, and ſuch other un-

ungratefull Duties? What Ground is there to expect the ſame Courſe of Obedience from them who engaged into a *Profeſſion* of *Chriſtianity* on theſe Terms, with thoſe who in the *Primitive* Times embraced the *Truth* in the *Love* of it, for its *own ſake*, with a deliberate Reſolution to foregoe *all things*, rather than to forſake its *Profeſſion*, or decline from its *Commands?*

Eſpecially were Men confirmed in their *Security* when they ſaw others *condemned Body and Soul unto Hell*, and conſumed with *Fire* and *Sword* in this World, for not being what *they* were, that is, *the Church.* They could not chooſe but applaud their own Happineſs, who on ſuch eaſie Terms were certainly freed from *preſent* and *eternal* Flames. When hereunto for the neceſſary Satisfaction of ſome Convictions, the Reliefs of *Confeſſion*, *Penances*, *Commutation* and *Redemption* of Sins by outward *Works* of ſuppoſed Piety or Charity were found out, with the great Reſerve of *Purgatory* in all Dubious Caſes, the Generality of Men bid an *open Farewell* unto the *Holineſs of the Goſpel*, as that wherein they were not concerned, and wherewith they would not be troubled.

In theſe things conſiſted the *Myſtery of Iniquity*,

Iniquity, the Springs and Occaſions of that *great Apoſtaſie* which was in the World under the *Papacy*.

(1) The *Doctrine* of *the Goſpel* (as to its peculiar Nature, the Cauſes, Motives and Ends of it) was generally *loſt*, partly through the horrible *Ignorance* of ſome, and partly through the pernitious *Errors* of others, whoſe Duty it was to have *preſerved* it. And how impoſſible it is to maintain the *life* and *power* of Obedience when this Spring of it is *dryed* up or *corrupted*, when this Root is withered and decayed, is not hard to apprehend. Sometimes *Truth* is loſt *firſt* in a Church, and then *Holineſs*; and ſometimes the *decay* or *hatred* of Holineſs is the Cauſe of the *loſs* of Truth; but where either is *rejected*, the other will not *abide*; as we have declared. And ſo it fell out in that *fatal Apoſtaſie*; Theſe Evils promoted and furthered each other.

(2) The *Ground* got by the loſs of *Truth*, was ſecured by the Application of the *Name*, *Title*, *Priviledges* and *Promiſes* of the *Church* unto all ſorts of Men, though living *impenitently* in their ſins. For there was and is virtually contained therein an *Aſſurance* given unto them, that they are in that Condition wherein the Lord Chriſt requires they

they ſhould be, which he accepts, approves, and hath annexed the Promiſes of the Goſpel unto. When men were declared to be in this Eſtate, what need they be at any Pains or Charge to have it *changed* or *bettered?* Certainly, in *general* they are too much in *love* with their Luſts, Sins and Pleaſures to part with them, unleſs they ſee a greater *neceſſity* for it than ſuch a Condition would admit. And for their further Security herein, they were informed, that the *Sacraments* of the *Church* did by virtue of their Adminiſtration alone conferre unto them all the Grace which they do ſignifie. Particularly they were taught to believe, That every one who had a *Mouth*, (whatever Villanies his Heart and Life were filled withall,) might *eat the Fleſh*, and *drink the Blood* of Jeſus Chriſt, (at leaſt by Concomitancy,) which himſelf hath aſſured us, that who ſo doth, *ſhall have Eternal Life*; *Joh.* 6. 53, 54. And other wayes almoſt innumerable there were, whereby through their pretended Intereſt in the *Church* and its *Priviledges*, even *flagitious Sinners* were ſecured of Immortality and Glory.

(3) For the Encreaſe of their *Satisfaction*, of the confirming of their *Security*, they

they found that *Hell* and *Deſtruction* were denounced onely againſt them who were not of the *Church*. For beſides one great Maxim of Truth which paſſed currant amongſt them, but falſely applyed unto their Advantage, namely, *That out of the Church there was no Salvation*, which Church they were; and one alſo of no leſs Uſe to them, though of leſs Truth in it ſelf, That the Church was like *Noahs Arke, all were ſaved that were in it, and all drowned that were out of it*, with others of an alike encouraging Nature, they ſaw the Truth of them exemplified before their Eyes. For if it ſo fell out, that there were any who did not belong unto the Church as they did, nor would comply with it, although they were evidently in their Wayes and Lives more Righteous than themſelves, they ſaw them by the Authority of the Church, *Curſed*, *Condemned unto Hell*, *Caſt into Dungeons*, and *conſumed* with *Flames*. And herewith they could not but be fully ſatisfied, that there was no Fear of Danger and Trouble in this World or another, but onely in not being of the Church, which Sin they were reſolved not to be guilty of, ſeeing they could avoyd it on ſo eaſie Terms. And it will be found

alwayes true, that as *Perſecutions*, with the Sufferings of the Saints of God, do tend to the *brightening* of the Grace of ſome, and the *Confirmation* of the Faith of others who really Believe; ſo they do greatly unto the *Obdurateneſs* and *Impenitency* of Wicked men in their Sins. Never was there a more pernitious Engine againſt the *Glory* of the Goſpel invented, than for *profeſſed Chriſtians* to perſecute, hurt and deſtroy others in like manner profeſſing *Chriſtian Religion* with themſelves, who viſibly excell them in an holy fruitfull Converſation, becauſe in ſome things they diſſent from them. For what can more *ſecure* Men in their Impietyes, than to perſwade them that they are *juſtified* in them by the Rule of the Goſpel, above thoſe who in all Duties of *Morality* do really excell them. Certainly, for Swearers and Drunkards, Prophane perſons and Unclean, to *perſecute* ſuch for Religion as are viſibly *pious*, *ſober*, *temperate*, given unto *Prayer* and good *Works*, is no uſefull Repreſentation of *Chriſtianity*. But,

(4) Theſe *Priviledges* and theſe *Atteſtations* were not *abſolutely* and *alwayes* ſuch Armour of Proof unto Sinners, but that ſome *Arrows of Conviction* would ever and anon pierce

pierce into their Minds and Conſciences, giving them no ſmall Diſquietment and Trouble. One thing or other, either in ſome Beam of Truth from the *Goſpel*, or from *Conſcience* it ſelf, on the Occaſions of New *Surprizals* in Actual Sin, or from *Fear*, or an Apprehenſion of ſome *publick Judgements*, would ever and anon befall them, and that unto an *inward Diſturbance*, beyond what the *Advantages* mentioned could reduce them from. And this was the moſt likely way of awaking them out of their *Security*, and cauſing them to enquire what God yet required of them. In this Caſe were the other Helps and Supplyes mentioned, found out and propoſed unto them. If it be ſo that you are not abſolutely ſatisfied with your Intereſt in the *Advantages* of the Church in *general*, if Sin will yet give you any Diſquietment, then you muſt to *Confeſſion*, and *Penances*, and *Works* of Redemption, with the like approved Medicines and Remedies for Troubled Minds. But if the Conſcience of any prove ſo *ſtubborn* or inflexible after all theſe Mollifying and ſuppling Medicines, that the Wound will not be *skinned over*, all that is yet wanting ſhall be well iſſued and ſecured in *Purgatory*, wherein it is

moſt certain, that never any Soul did miſcarry.

By theſe and the like Means, the Generality of Mankind was brought into an utter Inconcernment with *Goſpel-Holineſs*. They neither underſtood it, nor found any need of it, nor did like what by any Means they might hear of it; untill at length *a blind Devotion*, deformed with various Superſtitions, obtained the Reputation of it; the World in the mean time being drenched in Ignorance, Prophaneneſs, and all manner of wicked Converſation. So under the Name of the *Church* and its *Priviledges*, were *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel* almoſt utterly loſt amongſt men.

It will not be otherwiſe where the ſame Principles are entertained, according unto the degrees of their Prevalency. And were it not but that the Minds of Men are powerfully influenced with Reſerves from theſe things, it were impoſſible that ſo many *called Chriſtians*, ſhould in their Lives and Converſations exceed *Heathens* and *Mahometans* in Wickedneſs. The Commands of the Goſpel are moſt *holy*, its Promiſes *great*, and its Threatnings moſt *ſevere*; and yet under a *Profeſſion* of owning them all, Men lead Lives worſe than the *Heathens*, who knew

knew nothing of that holy Rule, or thoſe Promiſes and Threats of Eternal things wherein the higheſt Bleſſedneſs and utmoſt Miſery of our *Natures* do conſiſt, which theſe profeſs to be regulated by.

To ſuppoſe really the leaſt Countenance to be given hereunto by any thing that belongs unto the *Goſpel*, is to exerciſe againſt it the higheſt Deſpite imaginable. This Event therefore muſt and doth principally follow on the undue Application of the *outward Tokens* of Gods Favour and Pledges of Eternal Bleſſedneſs unto Men in their Sins, by thoſe unto whom the *Adminiſtration* of them is ſuppoſed to be committed by Jeſus Chriſt. And let none expect a Return of a *Converſation* becoming the Goſpel among Chriſtians, untill things are ſo ordered in the Church, as that none may flatter themſelves with a ſuppoſed Intereſt in the *Promiſes* and *Priviledges* of the Goſpel, who live not in a viſible Subjection unto and Complyance with all the *Precepts* of it. But whileſt all things are hudled together promiſcuouſly, and there is no more required to make a Chriſtian, than for him to be Born in ſuch a Place or Nation, and do not oppoſe the Cuſtoms and Uſages in Religion which are there Eſta-

bliſhed; we muſt be content to bear the Evils of that *Defection* which the World groans under.

Thirdly; *Great Examples* of Perſons exalted in Places of *Eminency* giving up themſelves unto *Boldneſs* in a Courſe of *Sinning*, which have fallen out in all the latter Ages of the Church, have had a ſignal Influence into the Encreaſe and Furtherance of this *Apoſtaſie*. Eſpecially they have had ſo where the Perſons giving ſuch Examples have been ſuch as pretend unto the *Conduct of Religion*; See *Jerem.* 23. 15. It cannot with any Modeſty be denyed, but that the flagitious ſcandalous Lives of many *Popes* and other great *Prelates* of the *Court of Rome*, have hurried many into the very Depths of *Atheiſme*, and countenanced Multitudes in a careleſs, voluptuous, ſenſual Courſe of Life. And if at any time a Man whoſe Wayes are made conſpicuous by the Eminency of his Employment, being as it were at the Head of all the Religion that is publickly profeſſed, and having the chief Conduct of it in his hand, as it is in the *Papacy* in many places, be *vain* in his Communication, *prophane* in his Principles, *ſenſual* in his Courſe of Life, *negligent* in the Duties of his Office, no way

way *rebuking* open Sins, but taking pleaſure in them that doe them; it is incredible how ſoon an whole Age or Generation of profeſſed Chriſtians, will be influenced, corrupted, and debauched thereby. For what is the Family like to be, when the *Stewards* are ſuch as the evil Servant deſcribed, *Matth.* 24. 48, 49, 50. As men are warned every day *not to be wiſer than their Teachers*, but duly to *obey their Guides*, ſo they either cannot or will not for the moſt part ſee any Reaſon why they ſhould be *better* than they, or walk in any other Paths than what they tread before them. When the *Sons of Eli*, the Sons and Succeſſors of the High-Prieſt, actually exerciſing the Prieſts Office in their own Perſons, gave the People an open Example of *Prophaneneſs* and *Lewdneſs* of Life, the Body of the Nation was quickly ſo far corrupted, as that the Judgements of God in the *firſt Captivity of the Land* enſued thereon. The World at preſent is ſo *precipitate* and *headſtrong* in a Courſe of Sin, that the beſt Examples are not able in any meaſure to ſtemme the Torrents of it. But if in any Place, at any Time, Encouragements are given unto men by any eminent Examples in ſinning, helping to remove

the remaining Curbs of Fear, Shame, and Reputation, Impudence in *ſinning* will ariſe unto an exorbitant and uncontroulable Outrage. Hereby then hath the *Defection from Holineſs* complained of, been greatly promoted in all Ages; for few or none of them have wanted *plenty* of theſe Examples. Indeed the firſt viſible *Degeneracyes* of Chriſtianity, as they *accompanyed* ſo they were *occaſioned* by the open Pride, Ambition, Strife, Contentions, and Conformity unto the World, that poſſeſſed the Minds and ſtained the Lives of far the greateſt part of the *Prelates* and principal Leaders of the Church, after it came under the Protection of the *Roman Empire*, and men thought to purchaſe an Intereſt in the good things of Religion, or at leaſt a *Repreſentation* of them, by giving Power, Wealth and Honour, unto perſons no way *better* than themſelves, who had got the Name and Title of the *Clergy*, or Guides of the Church. For about theſe things they contended endleſſely, to the ſhame of Chriſtian Religion, and the utter Loſs in the moſt of the true real *power* and *vertue* of it. And in following Ages as things grew worſe and worſe, the lewd and wicked Lives of *Popes*, *Prelates* and others, ſignalized

lized unto the World by their Power and Dignity, did by their Examples inſenſibly bring about a publick Conformity unto their Vices, according as the Concurrence of Opportunity and Ability did enable men thereunto. Wherever therefore Perſons ſhall fall within the Compaſs of the *Miniſtry* of the Church, or as Guides thereof are on that Account (on what Principles ſoever,) exalted unto places of Eminence or Dignity, whereby they are made Conſpicuous and Obſervable, if they do not proportionably excell others in *viſible exemplary Holineſs*, at leaſt, if they be not Unblameable in ſuch a *godly* Converſation as truely expreſſeth the *Grace* of the Goſpel, in Humility, Meekneſs, Contempt of the World, ſenſual Pleaſures, and the Pride of Life, Zeal and Diligence in the Diſpenſation of the Word, it cannot be but that *Apoſtaſie* from the Goſpel, as to its *Power* and *Holineſs*, will be kept up and promoted.

Fourthly; This *Apoſtaſie* hath been very much promoted by *Perſecution*. I mean not that Perſecution which hath befallen the ſincere conſtant Profeſſors of Chriſtianity from the *avowed Enemies* thereof, upon the Account of their Profeſſion of it. This is

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ſo far from being any Cauſe or Occaſion of a Defection from the *Holineſs of the Goſpel*, as that it hath been the peculiar Glory of our Religion, and a notable outward Means of the Encreaſe of it. So hath it been with reſpect unto the whole *Doctrine* of the Goſpel in general, and ſo it is with reſpect unto any eſpecial *Branch* or part it. It was the *primitive Glory* of Chriſtian Religion, that it ſet out in the face of an *univerſal Oppoſition* from the whole World, and not onely made good its Station, but encreaſed under the fierceſt Perſecutions, untill it had finiſhed that glorious Conqueſt which it was deſigned unto. And not onely did it preſerve its *Being*, and enlarge its *Extent* under them, but they were *Means* alſo to preſerve its *Purity*, and to exert its *Power* in the Hearts and Lives of its Profeſſors. The Church never loſt *finally* either *Truth* or *Holineſs* by the violent Perſecutions of its avowed Enemies. But I ſpeak not of the Outrages committed on the *flock of Chriſt* by *Wolves* in their own Skins, but by ſuch as have got on *Sheeps-cloathing*; for theſe things in whomſoever they are, proceed from the uncured *wolviſh Nature* in perſons on whom the Goſpel hath not obtained its promiſed Efficacy; *Iſa.* 11. 6, 7, 8,

7, 8, 9. It is *profeſſing Chriſtians* perſecuting one another, about ſome differences among themſelves concerning their Apprehenſions of *ſpiritual* things and Practice of Divine Worſhip, that I intend. And this hath been ſo great, eſpecially in the *latter Ages of the Church*, that it is queſtionable whether there hath not greater Effuſion of the Blood of Chriſtians, Ruine of Families, and Devaſtation of Nations, been made by them who have profeſſed the ſame *Religion* in General, than by all the *Pagans* in the World ſince the firſt Promulgation of it. He that ſhall *impartially* read the Goſpel, will not be able to diſcern how it was poſſible, that any ſuch things ſhould ever fall out among thoſe who pretend to avow it as their Rule and Guide, in any meaſure. For the whole Deſign, and all the Rules of it are ſo expreſſely contradictory unto any ſuch practice, as that no Man who had not learned the contrary from the Event, could poſſibly conjecture that any perſons could ever fall into it, without an antecedent *Renunciation* of the Goſpel it ſelf. But thus in proceſs of time it did fall out unto the irreparable *ſcandal* and *detriment* of Chriſtian Religion; and that ſo it would do, was fore-told. For the

the principal Deſign of the *Book of the Revelations* is, to foretell and delineate ſuch an *Apoſtate-ſtate* of the Church, as wherein the *External Power* prevailing in it, ſhould perſecute, deſtroy and kill thoſe who would not comply in the *Apoſtaſie*; for which reaſon together with *Idolatry*, that State is called *Babylon*. And we all know how it came to paſs under the Power and Prevalency of the *Roman* Church. And we may obſerve, that upon the Deſtruction of *Babylon* it is ſaid, that in her was found the Blood of the *Prophets and Saints, and all that were ſlain on the Earth*; *Rev.* 18. 24; that is, for the Goſpel and the Profeſſion thereof. Whoever therefore offereth Violence unto the Life of any on the Account of their Profeſſion of the Goſpel and Religion of Chriſt, be it under what pretenſe it will, he doth therein and ſo far joyn himſelf unto that *Apoſtate-ſtate* which ſhall be deſtroyed. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt came to reſtore that *Love of God* which was departed from our Nature, and thereon that Love unto and among Mankind which the Law of Creation Originally required, and that advanced unto an higher degree of Worth and Excellency by an Addition of new Motives, Duties and

and Ends unto it; He came to *ſave the Lives of Men and not to deſtroy them*, to deliver them out of a ſtate of Enmity and mutual Hatred, into that of Peace and Love. And can any ſober man imagine, that the Hurting, Impriſoning, Fining, Baniſhing, Killing and deſtroying of Men for no other Reaſon or Cauſe in the World, but for *Believing* in Chriſt, and *Worſhipping* of him according as they are invincibly convinced they ought to doe, is a good and due Repreſentation of this Deſign of Chriſt? Nay, is it not evident that this Practice draws a Veil over the Glory of it, obſcuring the principal attractive Beautyes of the Goſpel, and teaching the World a Chriſtian Religion, *fierce*, *cruel*, *oppreſſive*, *vindictive*, *bloody*, to the utter Excluſion of that which is ſo indeed. There is therefore no more expedient Courſe to draw off the Minds of Men from the due Conſideration of one principal End of the *Mediation* of Chriſt, (which is to turn them from the Goſpel, and to ſubſtitute another Goſpel in the room thereof, which yet is not *another*, becauſe it is none, whatever it pretends;) than for thoſe who profeſs Chriſtian Religion to *perſecute* others of the ſame Profeſſion for their *Profeſſion*, pleading

ing this to be a Duty of that Religion. Wherefore, when the Generality of Mankind, by what they heard and ſaw, were perſwaded that this was the true Religion, namely, Variouſly to *perſecute* and at length to *deſtroy* others, who profeſſing it did yet in ſome things diſſent from them in *Power*, they had loſt the *true Goſpel*, and the Benefits of it.

Beſides, that Religion is *alien* from the Goſpel, at leaſt includes a notable *Defection* from it, whoſe avowed Profeſſion doth not repreſent the *Spirit*, *Graces*, and *Vertues* of him who was its Author. Yea, *Conformity* unto him in all things is the *ſumme* and *ſubſtance* of that Obedience which it doth require. But in this way of *External Force* and *Perſecution*, there ſeems to be an Appearance of the Spirit of *Mahomet* and *Anti-Chriſt* rather than our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*. And hereby are the *Minds* of men infected with falſe *Notions* and Apprehenſions of the *Nature* of Chriſtian Religion, which whileſt they Conform themſelves unto, they depart from the *Glory* and *Power* of it. It hath been ſufficiently elſewhere evinced, how contrary alſo this Practice is to the moſt *plain Rules* and *principal Ends* of the Goſpel. And when at any time there

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is this kind of *Perſecution* prevailing among Chriſtians, there is not ſo much as the *form*, *face*, or *Appearance* of Chriſtianity left amongſt men. All that Love, Charity, Peace, Meekneſs, Quietneſs, Condeſcenſion, Mercy, Compaſſion, Benignity, towards Mankind, which belong *Eſſentially* unto Chriſtian Religion, are forced to give way to Wrath, Striſe, Revenge, evil Surmizes, falſe Accuſations, Tumults, Diſorder, Force, Rapine, and every thing that is Evil. Whereas therefore this Courſe hath been ſteered in many places of the World, and yet continueth ſo to be, the Generality of Men muſt needs be much *untaught* the Truth of Religion thereby. For that kind of *Profeſſion* thereof which is conſiſtent with ſuch Practiſes, is not directed in the leaſt by the Goſpel. And when the Minds of Men are hereby *unframed*, they are *unſuited* unto all other Evangelical Duties. Whatever Advantages any ſhall pretend to have by this Means accrueed unto the *Truth* (as they ſuppoſe) in ſome few Inſtances, yet as none can be ſo immodeſt as to deny but that it hath been a thouſand times more ſubſervient unto the Intereſts of *Errour*; ſo no pretended Advantage of *Truth* can countervail that Corruption of *Chriſtian*

ſtian Morality which hath been introduced and countenanced by it.

Fifthly; Want of *Watchfulneſs* againſt the Inſinuation of *National Vices*, and the *prevailing Sins* of any preſent Age hath effectually promoted an *Apoſtaſie* from *Evangelical Holineſs* among the Generality of Chriſtians. There are ſome Vices, Crimes, or Sins, that particular Nations, (on what Grounds I ſhall not now enquire,) are peculiarly enclined unto, which therefore abound in them. For it is evident what great Advantages thoſe *Vices* muſt have on the *Minds* of men, and how eaſie it is to have their Practice impoſed on them. All Men are continually encompaſſed with them in their Occaſions, and *commonneſs* takes off the ſenſe of their *Guilt*. That which would be looked on in one Nation as the greateſt *Debauchery* of Humane Nature, is through *Cuſtom* in another paſſed by without any Animadverſion. Hence the *Prevalency* of the Goſpel in any Nation may be meaſured by the Succeſs it hath againſt *known National Sins*. If theſe are not in ſome good meaſure ſubdued by it, if the Minds of Men be not alienated from them and made watchfull againſt them, if their Guilt appear not naked without the Varniſh

niſh or Veil put upon it by *commonneſs* or *cuſtom*, whatever Profeſſion is made of the Goſpel, it is vain and uſeleſs. Thus the Apoſtle allows that there were *National* Sins prevalent among the *Cretians*, *Tit.* 1. 12, 13. *One of themſelves, a Prophet of their own ſaid, The Cretians are alwayes Lyars, evil Beaſts, ſlow Bellyes; this witneſs is true; Wherefore rebuke them ſharply, that they may be ſound in the Faith.* Whatever their Profeſſion were, if they were not delivered by the Goſpel from the Power and Practice of theſe *National Sins* which they were ſo prone unto, they would not long be *ſound in the Faith*, nor Fruitfull in Obedience. So among the *Jews* there was a peculiar kind of *Stubbornneſs* and *Obſtinacy* above any other Nation under Heaven, which God complaineth of in their ſucceſſive Generations from firſt to laſt, and which continueth to be their *Characteriſtical* Evil unto this Day. Hence *Joſiah* was eminently commended, becauſe his *Heart was tender*, 2 *Chron.* 34. 27. He was not under the *power* of the common Sin of that People, which indeed includes all other Evils whatever. It was a rare thing to find one of a *tender heart* among them.

And we may obſerve, (in bring eaſily

demonſtrable,) that the *great Apoſtaſie* which is at this day among the Nations which have received the Chriſtian Religigion conſiſts in a *Degeneracy* into thoſe *Cuſtoms*, *Manners*, *Humours*, and *courſe of Converſation* which were common among them, and *National* before the entrance of *Chriſtianity*. Set aſide an *outward Profeſſion* and Formality of Worſhip, and the Generality of Men in moſt Nations live as they did formerly, and are given up greatly unto thoſe Vices which were prevalent among them in their *Heatheniſm*. A full Evidence this is, that the *Power* of Evangelical Truth is loſt among them, the Efficacy thereof conſiſting in curing the *Vices of Nature*, and thoſe Evils which men have been moſt habituated unto, as the Prophet at large declares; *Iſa.* 11. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Thus the Sin of this Nation hath been alwayes eſteemed *Senſuality of Life*, in an Exceſs of Eating and Drinking, with the Conſequents thereof. Hereunto of late hath been added *Vanity in Apparel*, with fooliſh, light, laſcivious Modes and Dreſſings therein, and an immodeſt Boldneſs in Converſation among Men and Women. Theſe were Corruptions which being borrowed from the *Neighbour Nation*, and grafted

grafted on Crab-ſtocks of our own, have brought forth the Fruit of Vanity and Pride in abundance. And it is the moſt manifeſt Evidence of a degenerate People when they are prone to *naturalize the Vices of other Nations* among them, but care not to imitate their *Vertues* if in any kind they do excell. But thus the *Luſt of the Eyes* and *the Pride of Life* are joyned unto the *Luſts of the Fleſh*, to give the World, (as oppoſite unto God,) a compleat Intereſt among us. It may be theſe things are reſtrained in ſome by *contrary Vices*, as Covetouſneſs and an earneſt Deſire or Ambition to enrich a Family, and leave a Name amongſt Men, a Vanity infuſed amongſt Mankind from the great Deſign of the *Builders of Babel*, which was to make unto themſelves a Name; *Gen.* 11. 4. This is but another way of the Exerciſe of the ſame Sin.

Now where Sins are thus *National* and *common*, it is Eaſier for Men to preſerve themſelves from the moſt raging *Epidemical Diſeaſe*, than from being in one degree or other tainted with the Infection of them. It is almoſt inexpreſſible how *efficaciouſly* they will inſinuate themſelves into the Minds and Lives of Men. They are ſo beſet on

every ſide with the Occaſions of them, and Temptations unto them, they offer themſelves continually with ſo many ſpecious Pretences, as that there is no Security againſt them but by being encompaſſed with the *whole Armour of God*, a Matter that few underſtand or apply themſelves unto. But it is not on any other Grounds or by any other Means for ſingle Perſons to hold out and prevail againſt a *National* Confederacy in Sin. For they who will not ſay a *Confederacy to them*, or in thoſe things wherein an whole *People ſhall ſay a Confederacy*, muſt be contented to be *for Signs and Wonders*, to be deſpiſed and even hooted at; *Iſa.* 8. 11, 12, 18. However it is apparent, that by them the *general Apoſtaſie* we treat of, is viſibly and openly promoted. Some are engaged in them by a corrupt Courſe of *Education*, and ſome are betrayed into the Entrances of them by *Sloth*, *Negligence*, and *Security*; ſome loſe a Senſe of their Guilt by their *Commonneſs*; ſome yield to the Arguments that are pleaded, if not in their *juſtification*, yet in their *excuſe*, or for their *extenuation*; one way or other, *Multitudes* of all ſorts are by them turned away from *Goſpel Obedience*. Hence it is come to paſs that *Chriſtianity*

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is (as unto Cuſtoms, Manners, Vanities, Vices, and Way of Converſation,) ſunk down into *Heatheniſme*; or prevalent National Sins have drowned the *power*, and left little but the *outward Form* of it in the World. And where it is ſo, the Life, Subſtance, and all the real Benefits of the Goſpel are renounced. For it doth not deſign onely to turn men in their *outward Profeſſion* from *dumb Idols to ſerve the living God*, to change the *Form* and *outward State* of Religion, as the *Roman Miſſionaries* have made Converſions of the *Indians*, giving them New *Images* inſtead of their Old *Idols*, and New *Saints* for their former *Zemes*; but to turn men alſo *from all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, to live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this World.* Where this is not effected, either the Goſpel never really prevailed among men, or they are fallen away from it. And where men do ingage into a Profeſſion of Religion diſallowing and condemning ſuch *National Vanities*, *Vices* and *Cuſtomes*, if they are publickly countenanced, they occaſion *particular Apoſtaſies* every day. This is that which on the one ſide and the other hath almoſt loſt the *Proteſtant Religion* in ſome neighbour Nations. For not being able to

hold out againſt thoſe *National Vanities and Vices* which are publickly countenanced, they find no Relief unto their Minds but in a *Renunciation* of that Religion by which they are condemned. And this I look upon as the principal Means of that general Defection from *Evangelical Holineſs* which prevails in moſt Nations: The Goſpel comes upon a Nation as on a *Wilderneſs* or *Forreſt* that is full of ſuch Wood, Thorns and Bryars, as the Soyl of it ſelf is peculiarly diſpoſed to produce. Theſe it cuts down to the ground, planting *good and Noble Plants* in their room, whereby the barren Wilderneſs becomes for a Seaſon a fruitfull Field; But in proceſs of time, if continual *care* and *culture* be not uſed about it, the Earth pours out of its own accord the *Weeds and Briars* which are Natural unto it. Theſe ſpringing up abundantly, choak the *other Plants and uſefull Herbs*, whereby the fruitful Field is turned again into a Wilderneſs. There needs no more unto this Apoſtaſie, but that *National Vices* for a time ſuppreſſed by the *Power* of the Word, ſhould overgrow the Generality of any People, whereby the *Graces* of the Goſpel will be certainly ſtifled and choaked.

Sixthly;

Sixthly; *Miſtakes about the Beauty and Glory of Chriſtian Religion* have been no ſmall Cauſe of Apoſtaſie from its *Power* and *Holineſs*. That it ſhould have a *Glory*, ſomewhat that might render it Honourable in the Eyes and Eſteem of Men was alwayes thought unqueſtionable, and it is certainly true; provided that we ſuppoſe thoſe with whom we have to doe, have Eyes *to ſee that Glory*, and Minds enlightened to make a true Judgement of it. In complyance herewithall was Religion outwardly figured and repreſented among the *Jews*. And as the Apoſtle declares that the Worſhip of God in the Adminiſtration of the Goſpel is *truely glorious*, and eminently ſo above what was to be found in the Adminiſtration of the Law; ſo Chriſtian Religion is in it ſelf truely honourable, and contains in it every thing that is ſo, in the Judgement of God and the rectified Reaſon of Mankind. But about the true Notion and Apprehenſion of that *Glory and Honour* which is proper nnto *Religion*, and ſuited unto its *Nature*, men have fallen into many wofull Miſtakes. For whereas it principally conſiſts in the *glorious internal Operations of the Holy Spirit*, Renewing our Natures, Transforming us into the

Image and *Likeneſs* of God, with the Fruits of his *Grace* in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, in a meek, humble, gracious *Converſation*, and the Performance of all *Duties* according to the *Rule*; few are able to diſcern Beauty or Glory or Honour in theſe things. But yet where there is not *an Eye to diſcern them*, the Goſpel muſt of neceſſity be deſpiſed and abandoned, and ſomewhat elſe ſubſtituted in the room thereof. This therfore alſo proved a great furtherance of the *general Apoſtaſie*, and continues an Efficacious Means of keeping Multitudes under the *power* of it unto this Day. For,

1. Through the Loſs of *ſpiritual Light*, and Neglect of the *Grace* of God, things were come to that paſs in the World, that thoſe who had the Conduct of Religion *ſaw no real Glory themſelves* in the things wherein all the *Glory* of the Religion taught and appointed in the *Goſpel* doth conſiſt. And they are but few that do ſo at this Day. Therefore the Profeſſion that is made of them by any, is generally looked on as *Hypocriſie* mixed with a certain kind of *Superſtition*, and is accordingly deſpiſed. Yea nothing is more contemptible in the World, than the *poſſeſſion* and *profeſſion* of

of thoſe Wayes which are *truely* if not *onely* Noble. Their View therefore being loſt in the *Eyes* of the Leaders of the Church, it could not be expected that they ſhould be inſtrumentul to open the Eyes of others, or carefull to inſtruct *them* how to look after what themſelves did not diſcern.

2. They were fully ſatisfied, that there was in theſe things no *Evidence of Glory* unto the Eyes of the Generality of Mankind whereunto they thought it Wiſdom to accommodate themſelves and the Notions of Religion. Men naturally can ſee no more *Beauty* in the ſpiritual Powers of *Chriſtianity*, than the *Jews* could ſee in the *Perſon of Chriſt* when they rejected him, becauſe unto them he made no Appearance thereof; *Iſa.* 53. 2. That *Religion* ſhould be ſet off and repreſented as truely *glorious* and *honourable* in the Eyes of Men, they thought it incumbent on them to take Care. But leaving herein the Judgement of *God*, of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the *Holy Spirit*, as declared in the Scripture, they accommodated themſelves unto the carnal Apprehenſions of them with whom they had to doe, which were alſo ſuited unto their own. Wherefore, that this *Glory* of Religion

Religion conſiſted in a *Miniſtry* in the Church humble, holy, laborious, eminent in the Graces and Gifts of the Spirit, looking for no Honour or Reſpect but *for their Works ſake*; in a *Worſhip* plain, unadorned, ſpiritual, whoſe Life and Excellency conſiſts in the inviſible, effectual Adminiſtrations of the Spirit of God, in *Meekneſs*, *Self-denyal*, *Mortification* of *Sin*, and the Fruits of *Righteouſneſs* proceeding from the *Grace* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, they neither did apprehend themſelves, nor could imagine that others would be of that Mind. For the World generally ſuppoſeth the direct contrary unto all theſe to be *honourable* and *glorious*. Things which have a pretenſe of *Height and Gallantry of Spirit*, a *Religious Worſhip* ſet off with ſuch Ornaments and Modes as to affect the outward Senſes, with ſomewhat that may give Satisfaction unto *Luſt* and *Conſcience* at the ſame time, are the things which unto the moſt are alone deſireable. Wherefore, all Pretence unto the *Power* of Religion Dwindling away into an empty jejune *Form* and Appearance of it in *Monkery*, the ſuppoſed *Glory* of Chriſtianity in the World iſſued in theſe three things.

(1.) The *ſecular Pomp and Grandeur of*

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the Rulers of the Church. This was deſigned to beget a Reverence unto their *Perſons* and *Offices*, without which *Religion* it ſelf would be deſpiſed. And it is eaſily conceivable how by this Means their Minds were drawn off from a *due conſideration* of all thoſe things which are truely *honourable* in them, and the Neglect whereof will be the loſs of the *Power* of Religion in the moſt at any time. For when they had ſecured unto themſelves that *Honour*, Reſpect, and Reverence, which they eſteemed needfull unto the *Glory of Religion*, and found very ſuitable unto their own Deſires and Ends, to what purpoſe ſhould they trouble or perplex themſelves with thoſe *hard Duties* of Exemplary Mortification, Self-denyal, and painfull Labour in the Work of the Miniſtry, when the whole of what they aimed at, or needed, was prepared for them. And how corrupt a Spring of *Apoſtaſie* brake forth hereon, hath been before declared.

(2.) A *Pompous Ceremonious Worſhip*, which began to be introduced by a Pretence of Outward *Solemnity*, and ended in plain *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*. And hereby were the Minds of Men diverted and taken off from inquiring after that *ſpiritual Exer-*

Exerciſe of the Graces and Gifts of the *Spirit*, wherein alone the *Beauty* of *Evangelical Holineſs* doth conſiſt.

(3.) In Works of *Magnificence* and *Bounty*, wherewith the *Clergy* were enriched, and the *Conſciences* of Men pacified in a Courſe of *Sin* or an *unholy Life*. When the World was once perſwaded, that in theſe things conſiſted the *Glory and Beauty of Religion*, and found them all readily complyant with their Luſts and Darkneſs, that real Holineſs and Obedience which is required in the Goſpel was every day more and more neglected and deſpiſed. Beſides, it is not expreſſible, what wicked ſcandalous *Practices* in Pride, Ambition, Diviſions and Contentions among the *Leaders* of the Church, did ſpring from and enſue on theſe Principles. Henceforward no ſmall part of *Eccleſiaſtical Story* is taken up with fierce *Contentions* and *Quarrels* about the Preheminence, Dignities, Priviledges and Juriſdiction of the *Prelates*. Thoſe who were wiſe and ſober among the *Heathen* obſerved this Evil among *Chriſtians*, reporting it as that whereby their *Religion* was debaſed and corrupted. Such is the Account given by *Ammianus Marcellinus*, of that bloody and ſcandalous Conflict between

tween *Damaſus* and *Urſicinus*, whether of them ſhould be *Biſhop* of *Rome*, *Lib.* 27. *Chap.* 6.

Seventhly, During theſe Seaſons, *Sathan* (as he will never be,) was not wanting unto his own *Occaſions* and *Advantages*; And they are altogether *ignorant of his Devices* who diſcern him not at work even at preſent unto the ſame End and Purpoſe. Nor is it poſſible that in any Age, Time, or Place, the *Glory* of the Goſpel ſhould be abated, and the principal *Endeavour* therein not to belong to him. He is the *Head and Leader* of every Apoſtaſie from God. Therein he began his Work in this World, and in the Promotion of it, he will finiſh it. And as he ingaged all his Power and Art againſt the *Head of the Church*, ſo by his total Defeat in that Attempt, wherein he made the cleareſt Diſcovery of his *Pride* and *Malice* againſt God, that it is poſſible for him to doe, he is not diſcouraged from purſuing the ſame Deſign againſt the *whole Church* it ſelf. And the way now inſiſted on, hath been the *chiefeſt Path* that he hath beaten in his Courſe. For, from the very Entrance of *Chriſtianity* he began to immix himſelf with all thoſe Luſts of Men whereby a *Defection* from

from its *power* and *purity* might be ſet on foot and effected. And he engaged againſt it in both his Capacities, as a *Lyon* and as a *Serpent*; As a *Lyon* he ſtirred up, acted and animated all thoſe bloody *Perſecutions* whereby the *Jews* and *Pagan* World attempted for Three hundred years to exterminate the *Chriſtian Profeſſion*. But herein his Succeſs was anſwerable to that of his Attempt againſt the *Head* of the Church, and ever will be ſo, by *virtue of the Victory* the Lord Chriſt had over him in the ſame kind of Conflict. The Force of the *Devil* and the *World* having been once fully broken and ſubdued by *Chriſt*, it ſhall never prevail in the iſſue againſt his *Followers*. Sathan in a Confederacy with the World may as a *Lyon* through Rage and Blood make a great bluſter, and *ſcatter* the Churches of Chriſt for a Seaſon, but *prevail* unto the Ruine of the Church in this way, he never did nor ſhall. And if at any time by *National Devaſtations* he do ſo far ſucceed as to expell the Goſpel from any place or Countrey for a ſeaſon, it ſhall be evident unto all that it ſhall turn greatly unto its *Advantage* in general, and in other places. Let not then any fear his *bloody Fury* as to the Intereſt of *Chriſt* and the

the *Goſpel* in the World. As ſure as he was conquered and triumphed over in the *Croſs of Chriſt*, he ſhall finally be ſo in all ſuch Attempts. Happy and bleſſed are they and ſhall they be, by whoſe Blood and Temporal Ruine his *power* at any time is or ſhall be broken. So I ſay it fell out in his firſt Attempt in this way againſt *Chriſtian Religion*. For through the Efficacy of the *Grace* of Chriſt, and by virtue of the Victory obtained againſt him in his own Perſon, he was overcome by the *Blood* and *Conſtancy* of innumerable holy Souls, untill he was caſt out of the Havens of the World, and an end was put unto his Rage. But in the mean time whileſt this ſworn Enemy of the Church made all this Bluſter as a *Lyon*, and raiſed all theſe ſtorms of *Perſecution*, which the Minds of all the Profeſſors of *Chriſtianity* were intent upon and generally much fortified againſt, he was ſecretly at work as a *Serpent* alſo. Herein he ſecretly and gradually infected the Minds of many with *Ambition*, *Worldlineſs*, *Superſtition*, and a Neglect of the *Power* and *Simplicity* of the Goſpel. That this is his Work as *a Serpent*, our Apoſtle declares; 2 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3. And herein ſometimes *he transformed himſelf into an Angel of Light*, as

as he ſpeaks in that place; *ver.* 13, 14, 15. For he not onely *poyſoned* and *enflamed* the Luſts of Men, but *drew them aſide* from the *Goſpel* by Suggeſtions and Pretences of *more Piety* and *Devotion*, or at leaſt of other outward *Modes* and *Means* of their Expreſſion, than it did require. So did the *Myſtery of Iniquity* work in the dayes of the Apoſtles themſelves; 2 *Theſſ.* 2 7. He was at *work* ſecretly by Wayes and Means not eaſie to be diſcovered, to draw off the Minds of Men from *Evangelical Truth* and *Holineſs*, by ſowing the Seeds of that *Ambition* and *Superſtition* which afterwards ſpread themſelves over the Face of the whole *viſible Church*. So was he the *Spirit* which animated the *Apoſtaſie* which by various and inſenſible Degrees prevailed in the following Ages. Thoſe who acted in it and promoted it, never knew any thing of the Deſign, but added one thing unto another, which gave it Encreaſe as Occaſion was offered. But in him the *Projection* was deſigned, and regularly carryed on from the Beginning. Hence had it the Name of *The Myſtery of Iniquity*, as being inſinuated and promoted by ſuch unſearchable Methods or *Depths of Sathan*, that thoſe for the moſt part who were ſubſervient to his Deſign,

Deſign, knew not what they did, though ſufficiently warned in the *Scripture* of what he would do, and what ſhould come to paſs. Wherefore, being diſappointed (as was ſaid) in his Endeavours by *outward Force* and *Perſecution*, (as he will ever be) leaving the *Name*, *Power* and *Advantage* of the Church unto them that profeſſed Chriſtianity, he made uſe of all the Darkneſs, Ignorance, Errours, Ambition and Luſts of Men, gradually to draw them from the *Truth* and *Holineſs* of the Goſpel. And he ceaſed not untill he had brought *Chriſtian Religion* to be looked on as made up *principally*, if not *onely*, of thoſe things which by his Crafts and the Luſts of Men were introduced into it. So did he purſue his Work, almoſt undiſcovered, untill the Generality of thoſe who profeſſed Chriſtian Religion were given up to the Power of *ſenſual Luſts* on the one hand, or brought under the Power of *Superſtition* on the other. All this he attempted, and in a great meaſure effected of his own Accord. But after that Men had voluntarily given up themſelves unto his *Deluſions*, rejecting the *Truth* and *Holineſs* of the Goſpel, as unto their *Love* to them, and *Delight* in them, God in his righteous Judgements gave

them up unto his *Power*, to be infatuated by him, and hardened, to their *Eternal Ruine*. So the Apoſtle expreſſeth it; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 11, 12. *For this Cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſions that they ſhould believe a Lye; that they all might be damned who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs.* Thus was the Apoſtaſie compleated under the *Papacy*. And by the ſame Artifices is *Sathan* ſtill at work among *us* unto the ſame Ends and Purpoſes.

Moreover, Among the *Occaſions* of the preſent Decay of *Holineſs* and the Power of *Chriſtianity* in the World, we may reckon *the Scandal that hath been given by*, or *is juſtly taken at* thoſe who have *profeſſed* the moſt *ſtrict Obedience* unto the *Rules* of the *Goſpel*. There is nothing difficult herein but onely to chooſe out the moſt pregnant Inſtances in the Multitudes which offer themſelves, to evidence this Occaſion. Nor do I intend ſuch Offences as ſome men will *enviouſly* ſeek after, and ſometimes *cauſeleſly* create, but ſuch as are *really given*, and offer themſelves unto the Conſideration of all ſorts of men. Of theſe I ſhall mention two onely, which are the moſt obvious and extenſive. And,

1. *Offence* hath been taken at the *Diviſions*

ſions that have been among them, and continue ſo to be, with the Management of them in an *evil contentious Frame of Spirit*. The Lord Chriſt hath declared and appointed, that the *mutual Love* of his Diſciples ſhould be the *great Teſtimony* of the *Truth* of his Doctrine, and the *Sincerity* of their Obedience. He hath alſo commanded them to be one in Heart, Mind, and Affections, praying for them alſo that ſo they might be. His Commands and Directions unto this Purpoſe are known unto all who know the Goſpel, and ſo need not here to be repeated or inſiſted on. The Bleſſed Effects and Fruits of them were *eminent* for a Seaſon among the Profeſſors of the Goſpel, and their *mutual Love* was a convincing Argument of the *Truth*, *Efficacy* and *Holineſs* of the *Doctrine* which they did profeſs. For where there is *Oneneſs* and *Love* thereon, there is Peace, Order, Uſefulneſs to Mankind, and every good Work; whereas the want of them is attended with Strife, Envy, Confuſion, Diſorder, and every evil work whatever. Some Diviſions indeed happened among the *primitive Chriſtians*, but were quickly healed by the Spirit of *Apoſtolical Authority*, and that *Love* which was yet prevalent

lent among them. But afterwards all things grew worſe, and the firſt viſible *Degeneracy* of Chriſtianity conſiſted in the Strifes, Diviſions and Contentions of its *Profeſſors*, eſpecially of their *Leaders*. And theſe in no long proceſs of Time proceeded unto that Exceſs, and were acted with ſuch an evil Spirit of Pride, Ambition, Envy and Malice, that the very *Heathens* made themſelves ſport with their Contentions, and obſerved that there were no ſort of Men in the World ſo Ready for them, and Implacable in them as the *Chriſtians* of thoſe dayes were. But when once one or other Party of them got into *Power*, and ſnatching that Sword of Force and Violence out of the hands of *Pagans*, which had been embrewed in the Blood of the *Holy Martyrs*, began in the purſuit of their Diviſions to *perſecute* one another, (which way *carnal* Men having taſted the ſweetneſs and Advantage of, as that which *gratifying* their Envy, Malice and Ambition, doth alſo (as they ſuppoſe) *ſecure* all their Earthly Concerns, they would not foregoe, nor have ſo done untill it is become the Topſtone of many mens Religion,) it was meerly from the unſpeakable Care and Mercy of God that they made not the *Goſpel* an

Abhorrence

Abhorrence unto all Fleſh. For who, not yet endued with that *Light* and *Grace* which might ſecure him from the *power* of ſuch Temptations, could look on the fierce, devouring, *bloody Contentions* of its Profeſſors, and that ſolely on its *own account*, and not ſuppoſe that it ſelf proceeded from a ſpirit of *Malice*, *Strife* and *Diſorder?* But the *Truth* and *Faithfulneſs* of God, preſerved it againſt all the Oppoſitions of its Adverſaries, and in the midſt of the Treacheries of its avowed Friends. Thus was it in the *Primitive Times*, which as it was the firſt conſiderable ſtop unto the Progreſs of the Goſpel, ſo it was one principal Cauſe of corrupting the Converſations of many, filling them with a Frame of ſpirit in all things directly oppoſite unto that of the Goſpel. The Differences with their untoward Management which fell out among the *firſt Reformers*, was the chief Means that hindred their Work from an *univerſal Succeſs*.

Is it much otherwiſe among the *ſtricteſt ſorts* of Profeſſors at this Day? Doe not ſome ſeem to aime at nothing more than to multiply and encreaſe *Diviſions*, and to delight in nothing more than to Live and Diſpute in the *Flames* of them? There is

not the leaſt different Apprehenſion of mens Minds about any thing in Religion, but ſuch Perſons ſuppoſe it a ſufficient Ground to quarrel and contend about it for ever. By ſuch Wayes and Means *Scandals* are given unto the World in its proneneſs unto Apoſtaſie, and ſeeking Occaſions for it, or Countenance unto it, which is its preſent poſture. For theſe things are not done in a corner. Men who know nothing of the *inward power* and vertue of that Religion which is in ſuch Profeſſors as it is hoped, ſeeing and obſerving thoſe other Diſtempers among them, are really *alienated* from all the Good they do profeſs; and not onely ſo, but do from thence *juſtifie* and *approve* themſelves in their *Immorality* and *Prophaneneſs*, as thoſe which allow them a better Condition than ſuch Wranglers can afford them. By this Means hath Religion loſt much of that *awfull Authority* in the World whereby it oft-times put a Reſtraint on the Minds and Conſciences of Men, who were never acted by its *power*. What are the *Rules* whereby we ought to walk under the *Continuance* of theſe Differences, and what are the beſt Means to put an Iſſue unto them, I have enquired in a Treatiſe unto that purpoſe.

But

But it muſt be acknowledged, that for the moſt part, Attempts for the *rebuking* of theſe Diſtempers, the *Reconciliation* of Diſſenters and the *uniting* of Profeſſors, have been mannaged from ſuch *Principles*, and in ſuch a Frame of *Spirit*, as have heightned and encreaſed rather than allayed or diminiſhed them.

2. Great *Offence* is given to the World by the *Vſeleſneſs of Profeſſors*, and in that they are not what they ought to be, the *common Good and Bleſſing of Mankind*. There is a *ſelfiſh* Spirit on many of them, whence contenting themſelves with *Abſtinence* from known Sins, and the *Performance* of the Religious Duties of Divine Worſhip, they are of little or no uſe unto others. Some will be *kinde*, *benigne*, *helpfull*, *good* in ſome meaſure unto other men; but yet will and doe give undue Bounds and Limits unto their Actings in this kind. Their *own Houſhold*, and the *Houſhold of Faith*, according unto that meaſure which from Opinion or Prejudice they take of it, they will alone regard. As for Love, Condeſcenſion, Benignity, Kindneſs, Readineſs to help, aſſiſt and relieve *all Mankind*, yea the *worſt of Men* as they have Opportunity, they underſtand them not; yea have

many Pretences that they are not required of them. But if we are *Chriſtians*, it is required of us to *abound in Love towards all men*; 1 *Theſſ.* 3. 12. and our doing Good unto all, being Uſefull unto all, exerciſing Loving Kindneſs in the Earth towards all, is the principal way whereby we may *expreſs* our ſincere Obedience unto the Goſpel. One *Profeſſor* that is kind, benign, condeſcending, charitable, uſefull, ready to *become all things unto all men* for their good, brings more Glory to the Goſpel than an hundred who are looked on as thoſe who live too much unto themſelves. When the Old Saying was, *Bonus vir Cajus Sejus, ſed Malus quia Chriſtianus*; Such a one is a Good man, Evil onely in this that he is a Chriſtian; Religion did by ſuch Convictions inſenſibly get ground amongſt men. If the World cannot ſee that it hath any *advantage* by Profeſſors, but hath *Trouble* on the other hand by the Hatred which it cannot but have of their *Profeſſion*, it is no wonder if it deſire to have no more to doe with them. Did men find that ſo ſoon as any gave themſelves unto the *ſtricteſt wayes* of Profeſſion, that therewithall they became *benign*, *kind*, *merciſull*, *charitable*, *uſefull* and *helpfull* unto all Men, it could

could not but give an Honourable Reputation in their Minds unto that Religion which they do profeſs. But an Obſervation of a *contrary* Frame and Temper in ſuch Perſons, and of how little *uſe* they are in the World, muſt needs produce *contrary* Effects. By reaſon of ſuch Miſcarriages as theſe and others of an alike Nature, whereby ſome Profeſſors are ſo far from *adorning the Goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, as that they caſt (what lyes in them) a Blemiſh and Reproach upon it, others are every day hardened in their *Alienation* from all its Concerns.

Theſe *few Inſtances* have I given of the *Means* and *Wayes* whereby a *general Apoſtaſie* from the Holy *Precepts* of the Goſpel, as the Rule of our Obedience, hath been begun and carried on. Many others of an alike Nature might be added unto them; But it is to no purpoſe to inſiſt long on the *Nature of a Diſeaſe*, when we find it to deſpiſe all poſſible *Remedyes*. *Sovereign Grace* yet remaineth, whereunto this State of things is referred.

And this *Apoſtaſie* in its Meaſure and Proportion partakes of the Guilt of that preſcribed in the *Text* which we made the Foundation of this Diſcourſe. For therein

alſo

Alſo is Chriſt *crucifyed afreſh, and put unto open ſhame.* For,

(1) All Perſons who *profeſs* the *Chriſtian Religion*, and yet are thus fallen off or *alienated* from its *Holineſs*, do really *renounce* and foregoe the *Commands* of *Chriſt*, and thoſe as enlivened by his *Promiſes*, for the *pleaſure* and *wages* of Sin. And herein doe they openly declare and avow as the Judgement and Reſolution of their *Minds*, That there is not that Excellency in his *Precepts*, nor that Goodneſs, Beauty, Deſireablneſs or Satisfaction in *Obedience* unto them, or not that Aſſurance in his *Promiſes*, or Worth in the things *promiſed*, as that they ought to be preferred before the Courſe of the *World* and the Pleaſures of *Sin*. Hence ſome *Commands* of the Goſpel (and thoſe of no ſmall Importance unto the Furtherance of holy Obedience,) are neglected and caſt from among the Generality of Chriſtians. Such are the Commands for *mutual Love*, whereof there is ſcarce any ſhadow left in the World. For that Pretence of it which ſome ſeem to reſt in, and plead for as *ſatisfactory*, in the Peaceable and (as they ſay) loving Converſe of Perſons in their *Civil* and *Eccleſiaſtical* Diſtributions, is no other than what is found among *Mahometans* and

and *Pagans* on the like Occaſion, which as it is good and commendable ſo far as it proceeds from and is ſuited unto the Light of Nature, ſo it no way anſwers either in the Kind of it or in its Acts and Fruits, unto that *Evangelical Love* which the Lord Chriſt requires among his Diſciples. That *Watchfulneſs* over one another with Love Care and Tenderneſs, thoſe *mutual Admonitions*, Exhortations and Conſolations which the Goſpel ſo frequently and diligently preſcribes unto us are not onely *neglected*, but ſo far *deſpiſed* that the very Naming of ſuch Duties is made a matter of *ſcorn*, as a Pretence of *hypocritical preciſeneſs*. And no better Entertainment have many other of the *Commands of Chriſt* among the Generality of them that are called *Chriſtians*. So do many, on all Accounts, openly profeſs in their Walkings and Converſation, that they ſee no cogent Reaſon why they ſhould comply with him in his *Commands*. And it is not eaſily to be conceived how they can caſt a greater *Diſhonour* or *Contempt* upon him.

(2) By continuing in the *outward Profeſſion of Chriſtianity*, they do moſt *falſely* repreſent *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel* unto the World, and thereby (what lyes in them) *put him*

him to open ſhame. For, pretending to yield Obedience unto him, and to place their *Hope* for Life and Bleſſedneſs in Him by the Goſpel, they profeſs withall that he is a Perſon that will *approve of ſuch Wayes as they walk in*, and his Goſpel a Doctrine that *gives countenance* unto all manner of Licentiouſneſs in *Sin*. Who would judge otherwiſe who had no knowledge of *Him* or *It*, but by the *Repreſentation* that is made of them in the profligate Converſation of ſuch *Apoſtates*. But this Argumeut I have elſewhere inſiſted on.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Apoſtaſie from Evangelical Worſhip.

THat which was propoſed to be conſidered in the laſt place, is that *Apoſtaſie* which is in the World from the *Purity of the Worſhip of the Goſpel* as appointed by Jeſus Chriſt. And herein principally did conſiſt that great *Defection* foretold by our Apoſtle, 2 *Theſſ.* 2. which is alſo propheſied of in the *Revelations*, and did accordingly come to paſs. But becauſe I have inſiſted on this Subject on many other Occaſions, and ſome things relating thereunto are under *Difference* and *Debate* among ſuch as are capable of the Warning given concerning the *Apoſtaſie* that is in the World, I ſhall wholly wave the Conſideration of particulars, about which any ſuch Differences may be, and onely mention ſuch things as the Generality of Chriſtians, at leaſt of *Proteſtants*, cannot but acknowledge.

I ſhall take it for granted at preſent, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt did *inſtitute and appoint a ſolemn Worſhip of God* to be continued inviolably and unalterably unto the End of the World. And the principal End of his appointing, continuing or preſerving any *Church* on the Earth, is the *Celebration of this Worſhip*. For herein alone conſiſteth that *publick Revenue* of Glory which God requires from Believers in this World. All other Duties of the Goſpel may be performed by Men in their *ſingle Capacities* if there were no ſuch thing as a *Church* on the Earth. And thoſe *Churches* do exceedingly miſtake their Duty, and the very End of their Being, which make it not their principal Buſineſs to take care of the due *Celebration* of that *Worſhip* which the Lord Chriſt hath appointed. *He was faithfull in the whole Houſe of God as was Moſes*; *Heb.* 3. 6. And if the Life, Being, Happineſs and Welfare of the Church of *Iſrael* conſiſted in and depended on their Remembrance of the *Law of Moſes*, which God *commanded unto him in Horeb, with the Statutes and Judgements*; *Mal.* 4. 4. becauſe he was *faithfull in the Houſe of God* as a Servant; certainly the Being and Well-being of the *Chriſtian Church* conſiſts in and depends

depends upon their *obſerving and doing of all whatever* He *hath commanded* in the *Worſhip* of God, as *Math.* 28. 18; *who is faithfull as a Son* in and over the whole Houſe of God.

Beſides it is acknowledged by all, and we ſhall (God willing) ſhew the *Manner* of it in our Expoſition of the *ſeventh Chapter* of the *Epiſtle to the Hebrews*, that the Lord Chriſt in and by the Goſpel, hath altered and aboliſhed all that *Solemn Worſhip*, all thoſe Ordinances and Inſtitutions which God himſelf had ſet up under the Old Teſtament, to continue unto the *time of Reformation.* And hereby he rendred it abſolutely *unlawfull* for any one to ſerve God according unto thoſe Inſtitutions. Hereunto God ſignally ſet his publick Seal of Approbation in the ſight of the World. For no ſooner had the Lord Chriſt by the *Promulgation of the Goſpel* taken away all their Authority and Obligatory *power*, ſo as that his Diſciples ought not to make uſe of them any longer; but that God immediately by ſevere and unparallel'd Judgements deſtroyed *the Seat and Place* of them, ſo that thoſe who *would*, yet never *could* Regularly make uſe of them unto this Day. And ſhall we think that the Lord

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt thus took away and *aboliſhed* the *old ſolemn Worſhip of the Church*, and ſubſtituted *none* in the room of it? Or that he took away that which was erected by the *Wiſdom of God*, though but for a Seaſon, and left the Church as to its main *Duty* and principal *End* in this World, unto the *Inventions* and *Imaginations* of Men? One of theſe muſt be ſuppoſed, if it be denyed that he hath eſtabliſhed a *ſolemn Worſhip* of God, to continue unalterably unto the End of the World; and both of them are highly Blaſphemous. Again, let any in Faith and Obedience unto him, *practiſe* and attend unto all thoſe parts of *Divine Worſhip* which he hath appointed, and I am perſwaded no Man will have the Confidence to ſay, that there is this or that wanting to render it *a ſolemn* and acceptable Service; however they may contend for the *conveniency* of ſome *circumſtantial Additionals*. Wherefore, I take it for granted at preſent, that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath appointed ſuch a *ſolemn Worſhip* under the Goſpel, which all his Diſciples are obliged conſtantly and invariably to obſerve, as he declares, *Matth.* 28. 20. And with reſpect hereunto Men may *fall away* and Apoſtatize from the Goſpel, no leſs *ſinfully*

fully and *fatally* than they may fall from the *Myſtery* of its *Doctrine* or the *Holineſs* of its *Precepts*. And there are two wayes whereby this may be done. (1) By *neglecting* and *refuſing* to *obſerve and doe* what he hath *appointed*. (2) By *adding Appointments* of our own thereunto, inconſiſtent with and deſtructive of that which he hath ordained.

I. In the firſt way we have ſome among our ſelves who are fallen off from the *Worſhip* of the Goſpel. It is true, they will doe *ſome things* which have an Appearance of being what he hath *commanded*. Such are their *Firſt-dayes Meeting* and their *Prayers* with *ſpeaking* in them. But they neither obſerve the *Lords Day*, nor *pray* or *ſpeak* in Obedience unto any Inſtitution of his. *Conveniency* and the *Light within* are all the Reaſon and Guide which they plead for them. And for the *Sacraments*, or *Baptiſme* and *the Supper of the Lord*, which are ſo great a part of the *Myſtical Worſhip* of the Church, on I know not what fond Pretences, they utterly reject. In like manner they deal with a ſtated *Miniſtry* as of *Chriſts Appointment*, although they have found out Means to ſet up *one* of their own.

And becauſe herein alſo Chriſt is put *unto open ſhame*, we ſhall briefly enquire into the Grounds and Reaſons of this *Defection* from the Obedience due to his *Commands*.

(1.) Now the *principal Reaſon* (and which comprizeth all others) why ſome men have *forſaken* the Goſpel as unto the *Adminiſtration of its Ordinances*, is, becauſe they are no way ſuited unto, nor indeed conſiſtent with that *Faith* and *Obedience* which they have betaken themſelves unto. For the Ordinances of the Goſpel are *Repreſentations* of the things which we Believe, and *Means* of the Conveyance of their Efficacy unto us. Unto the Confirmation of that *Faith*, and our *Edification* therein, are they ſuited, and to nothing elſe. Now theſe Perſons having fallen (as we have ſhewed) from the *Faith* of the Goſpel in the *Myſtery* of it, and the *ſpiritual Obedience* which it doth require, of what uſe can the Ordinances of *Worſhip* be unto them? For Inſtance; The Ordinance of the *Lords Supper* is inſtituted in the *Remembrance of the Death of Chriſt*, of his *ſuffering* in our ſtead, of the *Sacrifice* he made of himſelf therein, of the *Attonement* or *Reconciliation* with God that he wrought,

wrought, and of the *ſealing* of the *New Covenant* with his *Blood.* To what end ſhould any man ſolemnly *worſhip* God in and by this Ordinance, who upon the matter believeth none of theſe things, at leaſt doth not Believe them as propoſed in the Goſpel, namely, as the *principal Cauſes* and *Springs* of Life, Righteouſneſs and Salvation? Thoſe who believe in God thorough theſe things, who find the Effects of them upon their Souls in Righteouſneſs and Peace, cannot but delight to be found in the Exerciſe of *Faith* through this Ordinance, as they know it to be their Duty ſo to doe. But it is apparent, that neither this nor the other Ordinance of *Baptiſme* do contribute any thing to the Furtherance, Encreaſe, or Eſtabliſhment of that *Light within Men*, which upon the matter they reſolve their Faith and Obedience into. Yea they are in their true and proper Notion, as both directing unto the *ſanctifying* and *juſtifying* Blood of Chriſt, *diametrically* oppoſite thereunto, and unto what is aſcribed unto it. It is therefore ſo far from being *ſtrange* that theſe Men ſhould forſake theſe Ordinances of *Goſpel Worſhip*, that the Admiſſion of them in their true and proper *uſe* and *ſignification*,

is deſtructive of the whole *Scheme of Religion* which they have formed unto themſelves. Where the *Faith* of the Goſpel is forſaken, the *Ordinances* of *Worſhip* muſt be ſo too, and ſo all inſtituted *Divine Service* be neglected, or other things found out that may ſuit unto the *Imaginations* whereunto Men are turned aſide.

(2) Another Reaſon hereof hath been want of *ſpiritual Light* to ſee through the Veils of *outward Inſtitutions*, and of the *Wiſdom* of *Faith* to obtain *Communion* with God in Chriſt by them. Our Worſhip under the *Goſpel* is either abſolutely *ſpiritual*, or that which comes immediately unto what is ſo. But in theſe Inſtitutions there is ſomewhat that is *outward* and *ſenſible*; And it is to be feared that many do reſt in theſe *outward* things, and proceed no farther in the *Worſhip of God* by them, than the Actions and Words that are uſed will carry them: But they are (as appointed by Chriſt) *Animæ Vehicula*, Means of leading and conveying the Soul unto an *intimate Communion* with God. That they may be ſo unto us, three things are required.

1. That we ſubmit our Souls and Conſciences unto the *Authority of Chriſt* in theſe Inſtitutions. Unleſs this be the Foundation

tion which we build upon, the whole Service will be *loſt* unto us.

2. That we reſt on the *Veracity of Chriſt* for the working of the Grace and accompliſhment of the Mercy repreſented in them, and Sacramentally exhibited by them. For they will not profit them by whom the *Promiſes* of Chriſt (virtually contained in them and accompanying of them) are not *mixed with Faith*; and we cannot believe the *Promiſe*, unleſs we ſubmit to the *Authority* of Chriſt in the Appointment of that whereunto it is annexed.

3. That we *underſtand* in ſome meaſure the *Myſtical Relation* that is between the *outward Symbols* of the Ordinance and the *Lord Chriſt* himſelf, with his *Grace* repreſented thereby, wherein the Nature, Uſe and End of the Inſtitutions are contained. And all theſe are neceſſary to keep up any *delight* in them, or a Conſcientious *uſe* of them. Where therefore all theſe are wanting, (as apparently they are in thoſe concerning whom we treat, being none of them either underſtood, owned, or acknowledged by them; whereas they have neither *ſpiritual Light* into the internal Nature of theſe things, nor *ſpiritual Gifts* for their Adminiſtration unto Edification, fol-

lowing the Conduct of their own *Principles*,) they could do no otherwiſe but *reject* them, and therein fell off from the *Worſhip* of the Goſpel, and thereby do reflect Diſhonour upon the *Son of God*, the *Author* and Lord of all theſe *Inſtitutions*.

II. There is *another Way* whereby Men may, and many Men do *fall away*, and have for *many Ages* fallen away from the *Goſpel* with reſpect unto its *Worſhip*; and that is, by rejecting its *Simplicity* and *pure Inſtitutions*, ſubſtituting a *Superſtitious* yea *Idolatrous Worſhip* of their own in the room thereof; 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. For whereas there are various *degrees* of Declenſion from the *Purity* of *Goſpel Worſhip*, according as Men *forſake* any part of it, or make any *Additions* of their own unto it, yet at preſent I ſhall mention Them only by whom it is wholly *perverted*, that is, thoſe of the *Church of Rome*. For as they have added unto it *Rites* and *Inſtitutions* of their own, in great number, partly *Superſtitious* and partly *Idolatrous*, ſo there is no one *Ordinance* or *Inſtitution* of Chriſt which they have not *corrupted*, the moſt of them ſo far, as utterly to deſtroy their Nature and Uſe. Whereas therefore the Lord Jeſus Chriſt doth in the *Ordinances of Goſpel Worſhip*, and the due

Cele-

Celebration of them, repreſent his own *Religion* and *Authority* unto the Church; to remove them out of the way, and to introduce another *Fabrick* of them of another *Conſtitution*, is to repreſent *Antichriſt* unto the Church, and not *Chriſt*; and thereby to put Chriſt unto *open ſhame*. The Ways and Means whereby this *Apoſtaſie* was effected, by the Craft of Sathan and the carnal Intereſt of Men, in a long Tract of Time, I ſhall not here declare: It ſhall ſuffice at preſent to obſerve, That as Men grew *Carnal*, having loſt the Spirit, Life and Power of the Goſpel, and ſo far as they did ſo, they found it neceſſary to introduce a *carnal viſible pompous* Worſhip, ſuited unto that inward Principle and Light whereby they were acted. And as the People in the *Wilderneſs* being *carnal* in their Hearts, and accuſtomed unto *carnal* wayes of Worſhip, upon the Abſence of *Moſes* in the Mount, cryed out unto *Aaron*, *Make us Gods that may goe before us*, (that is, Gods viſibly preſent,) *for as for this man Moſes we know not what is become of him*, whereupon they made *a Calf*; ſo theſe Men finding the whole Fabrick of *Moſaical Inſtitutions*, conſiſting in outward Images and Repreſentations of Things, taken away, and themſelves left (as

it were) without any *preſent Gods* to guide them, that is, *viſible Repreſentations* of the Preſence of God as their carnal Hearts and Minds might delight in, they provided all thoſe *Calves* whereof their preſent *Worſhip* doth conſiſt. And becauſe there were many in thoſe dayes when this Deſign was firſt ſet on foot, who were *truely ſpiritual and holy*, worſhipping God *in Spirit and in Truth*, this *Idolatrous Worſhip* could not be introduced and preſerved but by *inſenſible Degrees*, and in a long Tract of Time; throughout the whole whereof the *Myſtery of Iniquity* wrought effectually unto the ſame certain End. Thoſe in the mean time who worſhipped God in *Truth* were either impoſed on, by a ſhew of Humility and Devotion in the *degrees of Apoſtaſie* which were added in their dayes, or elſe complained of what they could not remedy.

And if theſe *Brief Conſiderations* of the Nature of the *preſent Apoſtaſie* that is in the World from the *Power* of Chriſtian Religion, in all the principal *Concerns* of it, with the *Cauſes* and *Occaſions* thereof, do excite or provoke any who hath more Leiſure and Ability for this Work, unto a more diligent and uſefull Enquiry into them, it will be an ample Reward unto my Endeavours.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Inferences from the foregoing Diſcourſes. The preſent Danger of all ſorts of Perſons in the Prevalency of Apoſtaſie from the Truth, and Decayes in the Practice of Evangelical Holineſs.

THE laſt part of this Diſcourſe is deſigned for *Cautions* unto thoſe who yet *ſtand*, or *think they ſtand*, with reſpect unto that general *Defection from the Goſpel*, whoſe Cauſes and Occaſions we have thus far enquired into. And thereunto ſome Directions may be added, to be uſed as Preventives of its Contagion.

This *Method* are we guided unto by the Apoſtle, who having declared the *Apoſtaſie* and *Ruine* which enſued thereon of the Generality of the Church of the *Jews*, improves the Conſideration of it unto the *Caution* of others, under a preſent Profeſſion of the Truth. *Thou wilt ſay then*, (ſaith

(ſaith he to the Gentile Believers,) *the Branches were broken off, that I might be grafted on. Well, becauſe of Unbelief they were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by Faith; be not high-minded, but fear. For if God ſpared not the Natural Branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the Goodneſs and Severity of God; on them which fell, Severity; but towards thee, Goodneſs, if thou continue in his Goodneſs; otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off;* Rom. 11. 19, 20, 21, 22. And in another place on an alike Occaſion, he ſpeaks unto the ſame purpoſe; *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall.*

Moſt men are apt to ſuppoſe, that the Continuance of the True Religion in any place, depends ſolely on the *Prudence* and *Induſtry* of thoſe unto whom the Conduct of its Outward Concerns are committed. The *Intereſt* of ſome and the *Duty* of others in the Management of Humane Laws and Conſtitutions, are generally looked on as a ſufficient and the *onely* Means of its Preſervation. And thoſe of this Perſwaſion think they have *perſonally* no Concernment herein, but only to *herd* themſelves in the Multitude, and to take their Fate, whatever it be. Such as theſe will deſpiſe our *Cautions*,

tions, as thoſe from which the Reaſons and Confidences of their Fears are moſt remote. But whereas the *Profeſſion* of Religion in the Community of Chriſtians, will not be preſerved but by the *Power* of it in *Individuals*, the onely Root whereon it will long thrive or grow; we ſhall not at all concern our ſelves in them by whom the Directions of their Duty are thought *needleſs* or *uſeleſs*. For after the utmoſt exerciſe of *Humane Policy*, it is the *Wiſdom that is from above* which muſt be our *Stability*. And if the *Power* of Truth and Holineſs be not preſerved in the Hearts and Lives of *particular Perſons*, the *Profeſſion* of them in *Churches*, or the *pretence* of them in *Nations*, (which are all that will remain,) are neither Acceptable unto *God*, nor Uſefull unto the Souls of *Men*.

Some think themſelves, as for their own part, little concerned in theſe things. That there is ſuch a *Defection* from the Goſpel as hath been complained of, they cannot deny; and they will alſo grant, that it is deſperately *pernitious* unto them that are overtaken thereby. Therefore they ſuppoſe it not amiſs, that *Men ſhould be warned* of its Danger, and directed to avoid it. But this they think neceſſary for *others*, not

not for *themſelves*. For as for their part, they have not the like Occaſions, nor are expoſed unto the ſame Temptations with them who formerly Apoſtatized from the *Goſpel*, or are in danger now ſo to doe. Beſides, they know well enough what are their own *Reſolutions*; and that though all Men ſhould forſake either the *Doctrine* taught in, or the *Obedience* required by the *Goſpel*, yet ſhould their Conſtancy be immoveable. But I do not think theſe Apprehenſions ſufficient to render our *Warnings* needleſs. *Occaſions* and *Temptations* are not in our power. Our greateſt preſent Freedom from them, will not ſecure us from the Aſſaults of the next Hour. *Peter* foreſaw not his *Dangers* and *Fears*, when he ſo confidently engaged into *Conſtancy* in the Profeſſion of his Maſter, which yet within a few Hours came upon him. And ſuch is the Subtilty of our ſpiritual Adverſary, that ſometimes we are under the *power* of *Temptation* when we think our ſelves moſt remote from it. It is beyond the Compaſs of *Humane Reaſon* to take at once a Proſpect of all the *Cauſes* and *Means* thereof, with the wayes of its Efficacy and Prevalency. And if at any time we judge our ſelves free from an *hour of Temptation*, which

which comes on the World to trye them that dwell therein, which moſt are exerciſed with, and many are prevailed on by, ſo as to be ſecure and regardleſs of the *Means* of our Preſervation, of all men we are in the moſt danger to be *ruined* by it. Neither will the beſt of our *Reſolutions* be of any avail without the utmoſt of our *Endeavours*. The great Apoſtle thought and reſolved with reſpect unto the *Perſon* of Chriſt, that he would neither *deny him* nor *forſake him*; And if this Confidence did not *betray* him into his *Fall*, yet to be ſure it did not *preſerve* him from it; And it was upon his own Experience that he gave afterwards that holy Advice, that we ſhould *give a Reaſon of the Hope that is in us with Meekneſs and Fear*, 1 Pet. 3. 14, 15; and *paſs the whole time of our ſojourning here in Fear*; Chap. 1. 17. The higheſt preſent *Confidences* have ever proved the moſt deceiving *Preſages* of future *ſtability*. Wherefore, the utmoſt I deſign in the enſuing *Cautions*, is but to excite men unto a due Apprehenſion of their *Danger*, that they be not ſurprized into that pernitious Security, which is the *Mire wherein this Ruſh doth grow*.

1. The Conſideration of the *Extent* and almoſt

almoſt *Univerſality* of this *Apoſtaſie* may be of Uſe unto this purpoſe. Ignorance, Prophaneneſs, Worldly-mindedneſs, with Senſuality of Life, have obtained the moſt eminent *Catholiciſme* in *Chriſtendome*. The Complaint of the Prophet is not unſuited to the preſent State thereof. *Iſa.* 1. 4, 5, 6; *Ah ſinfull Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of evil Doers, Children that are Corrupters, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy one of Iſrael unto Anger; they are gone away backward. The whole Head is ſick, and the whole Heart faint, from the ſole of the Foot even unto the Head there is no Soundeſs in it, but Wounds and Bruiſes and putrifying Sores.* Do we hear but of this or that *individual Perſon* who hath Apoſtatized from a Profeſſion of *Holineſs*, in a ſenſual wicked worldly Courſe of Life, or is turned from the *Faith* into pernitious Errors, there is no Man that is wiſe and carefull of his Eternal Concerns, but he will take it as a *Warning* to examine, trye, and be carefull of himſelf. And this Counſel is laid before us by the Apoſtle; 2 *Tim.* 2. 18, 19. What then is required of us, when we ſee *Nations*, *Churches*, Multitudes of People by one Means or other, degenerated from that *Power of Godlineſs* which

which once they profeſſed. If we hear that one or other in a City is viſited with the *Plague*, we are not altogether unſenſible of our own *Concern* and *Danger*, becauſe we know how uſual it is for the *Infection* of that Diſeaſe to ſpread and diffuſe it ſelf. But if the *whole City* be infected, and *thouſands* fall under it every Week, there is none ſo ſottiſh as to need much warning of their Danger. And ſhall we be leſs concerned for our *immortal Souls* and their Eternal Condition, than we are for theſe *frail Carcaſes* and their Continuance for a few dayes in the World, which if they eſcape one Diſtemper, may yet in a few Moments fall under the Power of another? This *ſpiritual Peſtilence* that hath formerly *walked in Darkneſs*, is now a Deſtruction waſting at *Noon-day*. Nations are depopulated by it, and Cities left deſolate, as unto their Intereſt in God and the Goſpel. And is it not high time to look diligently leſt the Infection reach unto *us* alſo, leſt We alſo ſhould *fail and come ſhort of the Grace of God*, and be *hardened through the deceitfulneſs of Sin*. As then our *Bodies* are of the ſame Natural Frame and Conſtitution; as they have in them the ſame Humours, the ſame kind of Animal Spirits as are in thoſe

thoſe who are infected with the Plague, whereby we are obnoxious unto the ſame Infection with them; ſo there are in our *Souls* and *Minds* the ſame Principles of Sin and Love of the World, as are infected, drawn away, enticed, excited and enraged by outward Occaſions and Temptations, untill they have iſſued in *Apoſtaſie*. Do we think that we ſhall be alwayes eaſily preſerved (and that whileſt we are *careleſs* and ſecure,) from that Torrent which hath carryed away ſuch Multitudes before it? Are we in our ſelves *better than they* or any of them? Have we a *Patent* for our Preſervation, whileſt we neglect any Wayes, Means, or Diligence that the *Rule* requireth thereunto? Doth not God ſhew unto us, not *one* but *many* Churches and Nations, ſaying, *Goe unto thoſe Shilo's where I ſometimes placed my Name, and ſee what is become of them, and what I have done unto them?* Will you goe after them, have you a Mind to be made like unto them? Think not to ſay within your ſelves, *We have Abraham to our Father*; We have thoſe outward Priviledges and Advantages which they have not; for they alſo enjoyed the ſame untill they had forfeited them by their *Apoſtaſie*. Certainly the *general*

neral Prevalency of this Evil proclaims ſuch a Danger, as no wiſe Man, no man that takes care of his own Salvation, ought or indeed can neglect. Wherefore, as it is alwayes with Chriſtians, if ever it be a time to *watch*, to *ſtand on our Guard*, to *take unto our ſelves the whole Armour of God*, to be *jealous* of our ſelves, to be *conſtant* and *diligent* in the uſe of all Means both *private* and *publick* for our Preſervation, it is now a time ſo to be. And if Profeſſors will not be awakened, if they will not ſtirre up themſelves with the *Gifts* and *Graces* which they have received, if they will pleaſe themſelves that all is well with them and is likely ſo to be; if they will yet immix themſelves with Boldneſs and Confidence in the Wayes of the World; Oh that my Head were a Fountain of *tears!* Oh that my Soul could mourn in ſecret for them! ſeeing aſſuredly they will not be able to ſtand in that *Day of Temptation* which is come upon the Face of the Earth, to *trye* them that dwell therein. The *outward Court* is long ſince given to be *trodden down by the Gentiles*, and how ſoon the Enemies may roar in the very *Sanctuaries*, and *ſet up their Banners for Tokens*, we know not; For,

2dly, The preſent State of this *Defection* hath a dangerous *Aſpect*. Phyſitians ſay, *Nemo moritur in Declinatione Morbi*; No man dyes in the Declenſion of his Diſeaſe. And when a publick *peſtilential Diſtemper* is in its Wane or Decay, the Danger is eſteemed in a great meaſure over. But whileſt a *Diſeaſe* is yet *growing* and daily *ſpreading* its Contagion, whileſt the *Bills of Mortality* are every Week *encreaſed*, they are onely *hardened* and *profligate* Perſons whom the *Commonneſs* of the Judgement renders Regardleſs and ſenſeleſs of it. And it is no otherwiſe with the Evil complained of at this day. There is almoſt nothing in the World that *all ſober* Men do generally agree in, but this alone, *That the whole World doth daily wax worſe and worſe*. Who can give an Inſtance of the *Decreaſe* or *Abatement* of any one Sin, in its Love or Practice? but that ſome are advanced to higher Degrees of Confidence in their Perpetration, than former Dayes or Ages afford us any Preſident of, every one can declare. What Inſtances have we of a *ſpiritual Recovery* from any of our Decayes? What Attempts unto that purpoſe are made by any, unleſs by ſuch as are not of Conſideration, as have not Advantages

to

to enable them to Effect any thing therein? The World is highly at variance about *Religion*, mannaging its Differences with great Animosities and Industry, how one Way, Party and Profession, may draw persons from other Wayes and Professions. The sole Business of the *Church of Rome*, is by all manner of *Artifices* to win over men unto their Communion; that is, a Subjection of their Souls, Consciences, and entire Interests, here and for Eternity, to the *Authority* of the *Pope*. Others bestirre themselves as well as they are able, to keep what they have, and to rescue Men from their Seductions. And yet although they have the Advantage of the *Truth* on their side, and for the most part the Advantage of *Abilities* in the mannagement of their Cause, yet they visibly lose ground every day; and where one is recovered from the *Roman Interest*, many are added unto it. And there can be no Reason assigned hereof, but onely that the Apostasie is upon its Encrease, this being one way of it. Half that pains would have formerly turned an *whole City* from *Popery*, which will not now succeed unto the preservation of *one Person*. But in the mean time, both in one Profession and another, all sorts of men

continue regardleſs of *Goſpel-Holineſs* and *Obedience*. And whileſt they quarrel about the *outward Form*, the *inward power* of *Godlineſs* lyes neglected. Do we ſee things any where in the World upon a *Recovery*, or any thriving Deſign for the Retrival of *Holineſs*? The Name and Thing are growing more and more into Contempt. What Inſtance can be given wherein this *Apoſtaſie* from the *Goſpel* doth or may exert it ſelf, be it in *Atheiſme*, be it in *Popery*, in hatred of and ſcoffing at the *Myſteries of Evangelical Truth*, in Worldlineſs, Prophaneneſs, Vanity, and Senſuality of Life; in the Coldneſs in Love, and Barrenneſs among Profeſſors, that is not openly in its *progreſs*? And is this a time to be *ſecure*, *careleſs*, or *negligent*? Are we ſure that this *Epidemical Infection* ſhall not enter our Habitations? Do we not find how it hath one way or other attempted us already? Can we find no decay in *Zeal* or *Love* among our ſelves, no Adherence unto the World unſuited unto our preſent State and Condition in it; No neglect of *Duties*, no Rareneſs in Divine *Viſitations*, no want of *Life* and Delight in *ſpiritual Communion* with Chriſt, no hurtfull Growth of carnal Wiſdom, with all its Attendants?

Or

Or have we not found our ſelves one way or other ſenſibly attacqued by theſe Evils? It is to be feared that thoſe who can make no Obſervation of any thing of this Nature among themſelves, are ſomewhat ſick of the *Laodicean* diſtemper. And if we will not be awakened and ſtirred up to a more than ordinary Diligence, Care and Watchfulneſs at ſuch a ſeaſon as this is, it is to be feared that ere long the Generality of Profeſſors will come to be in the Condition of the Church of *Sardis*, *to have a Name to live*, but indeed and in the ſight of Chriſt *to be dead.*

3ly, As this *Apoſtaſie* is yet in its *progreſs*, ſo what will be its *Event*, what it will ariſe unto, is altogether uncertain. God can put a ſtop unto it when he pleaſeth, as he hath in his holy Purpoſes fixed Bounds unto it which it ſhall not paſs. But in the mean time being greatly provoked by the *Ingratitude* of a wicked World, no man knows how long he may ſuſpend thoſe more powerfull Influences and more extraordinary Effects of his *Word* and *Spirit*, which are needfull unto the *healing of the Nations*, and without which they will not be *cured.* I hope for better things, and pray for better things, but I have no cer-

tain Ground of Aſſurance that this Apoſtaſie ſhall not *grow*, untill in one Inſtance or other of it, it ſwallow up all *viſible Profeſſion*. The whole World, ſo far as I know of, (I mean theſe parts of it,) may become *Papal* again, or be ſo *corrupted* in their *Principles* and *prophane in their Lives*, as that it is no great matter what their *Profeſſion* in Religion be. Two things I do know or believe; namely, (1) That *the Foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this Seal, God knoweth who are his*; His Elect, that truely *fear* him, and diligently *ſerve* him, ſhall be preſerved from *periſhing eternally*, and every thing that neceſſarily leads thereunto. (2) That God hath appointed a *Time* and *ſeaſon*, wherein he will not only put a *ſtop* unto this *Defection* from the Goſpel, but an *end* alſo. He will one day execute the Vengeance that he hath written and recorded, on the Throne, Power and Kingdom of the *Antichriſtian Apoſtaſie*, and in *one day* ſhall the Plagues of *Babylon* come upon her; And *he will again turn to the People a pure Language, that they may all call on the Name of the Lord, to ſerve him with one conſent*; Zeph. 3. 9, 10. He will again *revive* the Beauty of his *Worſhip*, and the Glory of *Holineſs* in the Earth.

But

But in the mean time what things may come unto, I know not. Thoſe who pretend to a clearer Inſpection into *future things*, may not do amiſs ſtrictly to examine the *Grounds* whereon they proceed. For many have been made *aſhamed* of their Predictions that within ſuch or ſuch a Time the *Yoke of Babylon ſhould be broken*. This is all I ſay, (and I ſay it only for my ſelf,) I know no Aſſurance that can be given on infallible Grounds, that the *Apoſtaſie* which we are treating of, ſhall not one way or other, in one Inſtance or other, become again to be *Catholick*, and prevail againſt all open viſible Profeſſion of the Purity and Power of *Goſpel-Worſhip* and *Holineſs*. Now if this be not ſo unto others, yet unto my ſelf it ought to be a Warning, how I may be thought *worthy to eſcape*, and to *ſtand before the Son of Man*. And I am ſure, there is ſo much danger of it at leaſt, as to deſerve the Conſideration of all who take care of their Eternal Salvation. For if things ſhould come to ſuch a paſs, they are not many, they are but *very few* who will be *entirely* preſerved. The moſt will one way or other *ſuffer loſs*. And it is not an eaſie thing to be found among the number of the *few* in ſuch a ſeaſon. Can we

think that men careleſs in holy Duties, cold in Zeal, lukewarm in Love, barren in good Works, cleaving to the World, and conformable unto it, low in their Light, dubious in their State, uſeleſs in the World, fearfull of Trials, will be of this number? They are wofully deceived who are pleaſed with ſuch apprehenſions; other Principles, other Wayes, Courſes and Practices, will be required in them who ſhall be *hidden* and *ſafeguarded* in that Day.

4ly, The *various Wayes* whereby this *Defection* prevails in the World, ſhould alſo warn us to ſtand upon *our Guard*. Were it of *one ſort* onely, did it work onely *one way*, or made uſe of *one Engine* alone for its Progreſs, the Evil and Danger of it might be the more eaſily either withſtood or avoyded. But as we have before referred it unto three general Heads with reſpect unto the *Doctrine*, the *Holineſs* and the *Worſhip* of the Goſpel, ſo under each of them there are various Wayes and Means whereby it is promoted. The Infection from this Plague is taken innumerable wayes, *Heb.* 12. 1. Some take it in their Shops or *eſpecial Vocations*, ſome in their *Societies*, Civil and Eccleſiaſtical, ſome from the *Vanities and Pleaſures*, ſome from the

the *Profits* and *Advantages* of the World; Unbelief, the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, Corrupt Luſts and Affections, ſpiritual Sloth, Cares about, and Love of Riches, lye all in a Readineſs to give Entertainment to, and to embrace any Opportunity Advantage or Means whatever it be, whereby this Apoſtaſie may be admitted and take place in them. See *Heb.* 3. 12, 13. *chap.* 12. 15, 16, 17. Sathan in the mean time labours by his Inſinuations to corrupt our Minds, to poyſon our Luſts, and to ſupply them with all enveigling or provoking Objects. 2 *Cor.* 11. 3. 1 *Pet.* 5. 12. In this State of things look how many *publick Temptations* there are in the World, ſo many general Wayes and Means are there whereby this Apoſtaſie doth prevail; And who can reckon up theſe Temptations? Hence it is that men fall under this Evil ſuch various Wayes, and unto ſuch various Degrees; Some do ſo by *Errors* and damnable Hereſies, *denying the Lord that bought them*; ſome by *Superſtition* and *Idolatry*; ſome by a *Contempt* of Goſpel Myſteries, and preferring another way of Duty before Evangelical Obedience; ſome by *Ambition* and Pride of Life, ſome by Love of the World, and a Neglect of Duties *ſpiritual* and *moral* under

under a deceiving Profeſſion; ſome by ſuffering carnal *Wiſdom*, and ſome ſenſual *Luſts* to devour their Convictions and their Efficacy; ſome by the *Uncertainty* of their Minds brought to an Indifferency in all things *Supernatural* and *Divine*; ſome by *Vain-glory* and *Shame* to be found among the ſcorned Society of thoſe who are truely Religious; and Multitudes are initiated into an *irrecoverable Prophaneneſs* by the vain Pomps and Spectacles of the Age; And other Wayes there are more than can be recounted, whereby this Evil is propagated, and men fall under the *power* of it. By this Means the very common *Aire* we breath in, is infected, 1 *Cor.* 15. 33. *Snakes* are in all Graſs whereon we tread, and *Scorpions* under every Stone. Snares are laid for us on every hand, and thoſe (ſome of them) ſo gilded and ſet off, that Multitudes of looſe Profeſſors have taken them up, and wear them as their Ornaments. Thoſe who eſcape one Evil do every day fall into others. And how ſhall they eſcape who are encompaſſed with ſo many Dangers, if they live in the Neglect of any one *Duty* or Means of their Preſervation, that God hath appointed and made uſefull thereunto?

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5thly, Conſider, that there is an *Apoſtaſie* which is *irrecoverable*; and it will end in *Eternal Ruine*. This is that which we are taught in this Context, according unto the Expoſition before given of it. No man in this World can be by the Rule of the Goſpel in an *unſaveable Condition*, that is, be concluded under an unavoidable Deſtruction by any known Rule of the Revealed Will of God, unleſs it be an *Apoſtate*. There are alſo ſeveral ſorts and Degrees of *Apoſtaſie* that may have ſeveral Cauſes and Effects, and ſo various Events. Great Surprizals, ſtrong Temptations, Negligence in Watching againſt the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, may produce *Temporary Abnegations* of Chriſt and the Goſpel, wofull *Declenſions* from the due Obſervation of his Commands, with wandring into fooliſh Opinions, and yet Perſons be recovered from them all, and brought by Repentance unto Salvation. Signal Inſtances of this Grace and Patience in God might be given. And this is ſufficient to render the *Deſpair* of them cauſeleſs, who are ever awakened in this World time enough to endeavour a Deliverance from any Sin or Courſe of Sinning provoking and deſtructive. For when any man is by any Means called to have any thing

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to doe with God about his Eternal Concernments, God doth not allow him to be the abſolute *Soveraign Judge* of himſelf, which would uſurp his Prerogative, and put the Sinner in the place of God. He that *deſpairs*, ſayes, *I am in the ſtead of God to my ſelf in this matter; there is neither Goodneſs, nor Grace, nor Mercy in him but what I can comprehend.* And this Evil God hath obviated in ſignal Inſtances of the Recovery of great *Apoſtates*. But yet withall there is (as we have ſhewed) an *Apoſtaſie* that is *irrecoverable*; and hereof God permits many Examples in this World, to put an Awe not onely on *bold* and *preſumptuous* but alſo on *careleſs* and *negligent* Sinners. For whereas our Apoſtle doth expreſſely *twice* mind the *Hebrews* of this *ſeverity of God* againſt Apoſtates, in this place, and *Chap.* 10. 26, 27; in the one he doth it with reſpect unto *unprofitableneſs* under the Means of Grace, and in the other unto a *Negligence* in attending unto the Adminiſtration of Goſpel *Ordinances*. Now whereas any men may be overtaken with the *Beginning of Decayes* and Declenſions from the *Holineſs* and *Worſhip* of the Goſpel, all which have a Tendency in their own Nature unto this *irrecoverable Apoſtaſie*, ought they

they not to be continually *jealous* over themſelves, leſt they ſhould paſs the Bounds God hath fixed unto his *Patience* and *Grace?* Ought we not to be carefull about every Sin or Omiſſion of Duty that hath a tendency unto this dolefull Iſſue? For this very End, that we may be warned to take heed of the *Beginning of Apoſtaſie*, doth the Apoſtle in this place declare the *End* of it. The *Reader* may if he pleaſe (to help him herein) conſult our Diſcourſes on *Chap.* 4. *ver.* 3. It is not an eaſie Task to ſtop a *Courſe in Backſliding* when once it is entred into. And I ſhall cloſe this Warning with naming two Directions unto this purpoſe. (1) *Take heed of a Courſe in any Sin.* Though every Sin doth not immediately tend unto Final Apoſtaſie, yet *a Courſe in any Sin* continued, doth ſo. (2) *Take heed of* touching on ſuch *eſpecial Sins* as have a peculiar Tendency thereunto; and of what Nature they are, hath been declared.

6^hly. Our laſt Conſideration of this Kind ſhall be taken from the *Nature and Guilt* of this Sin, wherever it be found, with the *Severity* of God againſt it. And we may look upon it as it is *Total*, ſuch as that ſuppoſed by the Apoſtle, *Heb.* 6. 4, 5, 6. The

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Expoſition we have given of the words, will warrant us to conclude, that *Total Apoſtaſie from the Goſpel once profeſſed, is a greater Sin, and of a more heynous Nature than that of the Jews in Crucifying the Lord Chriſt in the dayes of his Fleſh.* This was ſufficiently proved in the Expoſition of the words. It remains only that we do briefly enquire what doth concurre unto ſuch a *Total Apoſtaſie*, whereby the Truth of the *Expoſition* and the Neceſſity of the *Warnings* given, will be made yet more Evident. And though I ſhall ſpeak with eſpecial reſpect unto *total* Apoſtaſie from all *Profeſſion*, yet are the things that ſhall be ſpoken, to be found in their *degree* and *meaſure* in all thoſe who are guilty of that *partial Defection* which we have deſcribed. There are therefore alwayes found in this *great Offence* the things enſuing.

(1) The *loſs of all Taſte of any Goodneſs or Excellency in the Goſpel*, in the Truth or State of its *Profeſſion* and *Worſhip*. There is no man who hath ever made a *Profeſſion* of the Goſpel in *Earneſt*, beyond Pretence and Cuſtom, but he hath found ſome kind of *Taſte*, Reliſh or Sweetneſs in the things of it. They *taſte of the good Word of God*, and *the Powers of the World to come*; either in

in the things themſelves, or in the Manner of their Diſpenſation, or of the Duties of Worſhip enjoyned therein, they have found ſomewhat that hath given their *Minds* and *Conſciences* ſome Satisfaction. A man cannot goe into a *pleaſant Garden* in the Spring, but he will ſmell *ſome ſavour* from the *Flowers*, though he gather not one of them. A man cannot take *Meat ſavoury* and well condited into his Mouth, but he will *taſte the Reliſh of it*, though he have no Mind nor Appetite to eat it. Nor can any man *walk* in the *Sun*, but he will have ſome Impreſſions from its *Heat*. It is ſo, it can be no otherwiſe with them who live under the *Preaching of the Goſpel* and make Profeſſion of its *Doctrine*. More or leſs it will inſinuate it ſelf into their Minds with *a Taſte of its Excellency* and *Goodneſs*. This in the Caſe conſidered is *loſt* in the firſt place. And generally it comes to paſs by a *Love of Sin* and *Pleaſures* of the World. When this hath filled and poſſeſſed the Soul, all its Sences grow *dead* unto *ſpiritual* things, it hath no Faculty or Ability to *taſte* any Reliſh in them; yea it loaths and abhorres them as contrary to what it hath immerſed it ſelf in, or given up it ſelf unto. This uſually is *loſt* in the firſt place;

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ſuch Perſons find nothing any longer in Chriſt or the Goſpel, for which they ſhould either *delight* in them or *deſire* them; And it ſeems to be thus with ſo many in the World, who once gave hopes of better things, that the Conſideration of it is dreadfull.

(2) This is quickly followed with *a loſs of all prevailing Evidence and Conviction of the Truth of the very Doctrine of the Goſpel.* This Conviction all are ſuppoſed to have who profeſs it, and all really have it who profeſs it in any ſincerity. Why elſe doe they make Profeſſion of it, if they aſſent not unto its *Truth* upon its Conviction and Evidence. For we ſpeak not at all of them whoſe Profeſſion hath no other Principle or Foundation but *Cuſtom* or *Education.* Others build their Perſwaſion upon *Grounds* and *Evidences* prevalent to obtain their Aſſent unto the Truth againſt Temptations and Objections; This *Apoſtates* loſe in the next place. The *Truth* remains what it was, and ſo do the Arguments and Evidences of it, but they have no longer any Force upon, or *Authority* in their Minds. It may be they do not preſently renounce the Goſpel as *a Lye*, or a cunningly *deviſed Fable*; They may let the *Notions* of it lye looſe in their

their Minds for a ſeaſon neglected and unregarded, but give them no part of that Entertainment which is due unto acknowledged Truths of that Nature, nor do receive any *Impreſſions* from its *Authority*. And when men have loſt theſe, they have loſt their Aſſent to the *Truth* of the Goſpel upon its proper Evidence, and are directly *Unbelievers*. And this on every Occaſion will iſſue in a *formal Renunciation* of the Truth of the whole. And when Men arrive unto this Poſture in their *Minds*, they will diſcover themſelves, as by a *Converſation* wholly regardleſs of the Precepts of Chriſt, ſo alſo by light irreverent Expreſſions concerning the *Scripture*, which (where they have Freedom) will be poured out from the Abundance of their Hearts. This ſtep towards *total Apoſtaſie* will follow that foregoing. When once Men have loſt all Taſte and Reliſh of the *Goodneſs* and *Excellency* of the Word of God on their Hearts and Affections, they will not long retain any prevalent *Evidence* of its *Truth* in their Minds. Hence,

(3) *A Contempt of the things promiſed in the Goſpel doth enſue.* The Promiſes of the Goſpel do indeed contain thoſe things wherein the evident *Bleſſedneſs* and *Happi-*

neſs of our Natures doth conſiſt. Such is *Serenity* of Mind in this World, and Eternal *Felicity* in the Enjoyment of God. Theſe (for the ſubſtance of them) Mankind cannot deſpiſe untill they grow *Atheiſtically Brutiſh*. But they may, and many do ſo, in the *manner* and on the Terms of their Propoſal and Declaration by the *Promiſes* of the Goſpel. That this Enjoyment of God (wherein *Everlaſting Happineſs* conſiſteth,) muſt be in and through *Jeſus Chriſt* alone, that the Way of attaining thereunto, and the onely Means of preſent *Peace* and *Serenity* of Mind, is by *Faith* and *Obedience* in and unto him, this they *deſpiſe* and *contemn*. This naturally follows on the former; for all Expectation of Good by and from the *Promiſes of the Goſpel*, depends on the *Evidence* that we have of the *Truth* thereof. And when *that* is loſt, *theſe* will be deſpiſed. Now herein conſiſteth one of the greateſt Aggravations of this Sin. For whereas men cannot but *deſire* the things (for the ſubſtance of them) which are *promiſed* in the Goſpel, as thoſe wherein their *Bleſſedneſs* doth conſiſt; they will (out of Hatred to *Jeſus Chriſt*,) reject and *deſpiſe* them, and Eternally deprive their Souls of them, rather than accept of them *in* and

through

through him: They will rather never have any Intereſt in *God*, than have it *by Chriſt*. This Rejection therefore of the *Promiſes of the Goſpel*, as thoſe which either as to the *Matter* of them are not to be *deſired*, or as to the *Truth* of them not to be *truſted*, is the moſt provoking Sin. No greater Reproach can poſſibly be caſt on *Jeſus Chriſt*; as that which leaveth him the Honour neither of his *Truth* nor *Power*; neither of which the *Jews* could in the leaſt impeach, when they took away his life. And,

(4) *They chooſe ſome other Way or Means in the place and ſtead of Chriſt and the Goſpel, for the Ends which they once ſought after by them.* So did thoſe Perſons who fell off to *Judaiſme*. They looked for that in the *Law* and *Ceremonyes* which they could not find in the *Goſpel*. And of theſe there are two ſorts; (1) Such as *retain* their *firſt End* in *general*, but reject the *Goſpel* from being a *ſufficient Means* for *attaining* it; (2) Some that *renounce* the *whole End* it ſelf, and ſeek for *ſatisfaction* other wayes. The former are ſuch as preſerve an Aym in general to *worſhip God*, to *do* that in Religion which may be accepted by him, and to *believe* that of him which is *right*. But they reject the *Goſpel*,

as an *insufficient* and deceitfull Guide in and about theſe things. And this is done either *totally*, by ſuch as Apoſtatize to *Judaiſme* or *Mahumetiſme*; or *partially*, by ſuch as turn off from the Purity, Truth, Spirituality and Myſtery of the *Goſpel*, unto *Popery*, or the like. I ſay not this with an intention to charge the Guilt of this whole Sin on this latter ſort; onely I ſay, they ſhare in a very conſiderable part of it, and without *Repentance* will do ſo in the Puniſhment due unto it. And this caſts the ſcorn of *Folly* on Chriſt and the Goſpel, both *abſolutely* as having neither Truth nor Efficacy ſufficient for the End propoſed by them, and *comparatively*, that a Falſhood or Lye, a diabolical Invention or Deluſion is to be preferred before them, which is the higheſt Provocation unto the Eyes of Gods Glory. The latter ſort quite caſt off the general End of *pleaſing God, and living unto him.* For a while they thought that this would have brought them in ſome conſiderable Satisfaction, and uſed the Goſpel to that End and Purpoſe. But now being fallen under the *power* of the former Degrees of *Apoſtaſie*, in contempt of the *Goſpel*, as that which will not afford any tolerable anſwer unto their Expectations, they

they take up in the Luſts and Pleaſures of the World, preferring them before all the *Promiſes of Chriſt*, and deſpiſing all the Threatnings denounced againſt thoſe that purſue them. And of this ſort of *Apoſtates* we have numberleſs Examples in the World.

(5) Hereunto is added, *a perfect Hatred and Contempt of ſuch as abide conſtant in their Adherence unto and Profeſſion of the Goſpel.* Conſtant Obſervation hath approved the ſaying, *Apoſtata eſt Oſor ſui Ordinis*; Great Apoſtates have been alwayes great Perſecutors in *Word* or *Deed* according to their Power. As thoſe who *love* Chriſt, do *love* all that are his, *becauſe* they are his; ſo they that *hate* him, do *hate* all that are his, *becauſe* they are his. And their *Hatred* becauſe it is againſt the whole Kind, acts it ſelf every way poſſible. They *deſpiſe them* as *weak* and *fooliſh*, for Adhering and truſting to the Things which they have Relinquiſhed, truſting to themſelves, their Reaſon and Gallantry of Spirit. They are filled with *Revenge* againſt them, as thoſe who cenſure, judge, and condemn them as guilty of the higheſt *Villany* and moſt deſperate *Wickedneſs*. They know in their Hearts that they have *Reſerves* againſt them,

as Perſons whom their Lord will one day *judge* and *deſtroy*, which makes them deſign (if it were poſſible) their utter *Extirpation* from the face of the Earth. Thoſe who *crucified Chriſt* in his own Perſon, did it but *once*, and could do ſo no more; theſe do ſo every day; for what is done unto any of *his*, for *his* ſake, he eſteemeth as done unto himſelf. *Why perſecuteſt thou Me?*

(6) Theſe Perſons who proceed thus far, do alwayes fall into a *peculiar Contempt of the Spirit of God*, and his whole Work in the *Diſpenſation of the Goſpel*. The Promiſe of the *Diſpenſation of the Spirit*, is the eſpecial *Priviledge* and *Glory* of the *Goſpel*. He is ſent and given in an eſpecial manner by *Jeſus Chriſt* as *exalted*. His whole Work is to *glorifie* and *exalt* Jeſus Chriſt, and to make his Mediation *effectual* unto the Souls of Men. And in the things which concern him and his Work, lyes the *Life* and *Soul* of the Goſpel. Hence thoſe who Apoſtatize from it, have a peculiar *Enmity* againſt him and his Work. And this uſually is one of the firſt things wherein the *fatal Backſlidings* of Men do manifeſt themſelves. When once men *tread under foot the Son of God*, and *account the Blood of the Covenant*

nant wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, (as they do in the former Inſtances,) they will aſſuredly *do deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace*; *Heb.* 10. 29. How this is done in particular, ſhall be conſidered on that place, if God will, and we live thereunto. Under this Head and Degree, the Sin of *Apoſtaſie* becomes formally *irremiſſible*.

(7) An *open Profeſſion of a Deteſtation of the Goſpel*, ſo far as it is conſiſtent with their *Worldly Intereſts* and Advantages, compleats the *Soul-ruining Sin* we treat of. It may be they may live in ſuch Times and Places, as that it would be to their Secular Diſadvantage openly to avow their *Renunciation* of Chriſt. But when that is the onely Curb from the Declaration of themſelves, the Frame of their Minds is eſteemed for a full Profeſſion of their Apoſtaſie.

Now whereas all theſe things (and it may be ſundry others) do concurre unto this Sin of *Apoſtaſie*, I ſhall conclude two things concerning it. (1) That it is *a far greater Sin* than that of the Generality of the *Jews* who *crucified* Jeſus Chriſt in the dayes of his Fleſh, as was before aſſerted. (2) That it is *inconſiſtent* with the Holi-

neſs, Righteouſneſs, Honour and Faithfulneſs of God, to *Renew ſuch Perſons* as are *fully* and *openly* Guilty hereof unto *Repentance*. Repentance may be given unto *them* in Hell, with as much Advantage unto the Glory of God. For when men after *Trial* and *Experiment*, with ſome Convictions of its *Truth* and *Excellency*, do obſtinately *reject* the onely Remedy and Relief that God hath provided for Sinners, and therein do *deſpight* unto the whole *Bleſſed Trinity*, and each Perſon thereof in his peculiar Intereſt in the *Diſpenſation* and *Application* of Grace, God neither in his *Faithfulneſs* will, nor in his *Holineſs* can have any thing more to doe with ſuch preſumptuous Sinners in a way of *Mercy*. He may and doth *endure them* for a while in this World, and that without any viſible Tokens of his *Indignation*, ſatisfying his Juſtice in the *ſpiritual Judgements* that are upon them; but it is onely as *Veſſels of Wrath fitted to Deſtruction*, and ſuch whoſe *Damnation ſleepeth not*. And theſe things may ſuffice to warn men of the *Danger* of this *Evil*; and they will be Warnings unto all who ſhall *conſider* them, who are not hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin; And all the Judgements of God, which are either

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impendent over, or already *inflicted* on a wicked Apoſtatizing World, are *Calls* from Heaven unto a Conſideration of them.

Now although the Generality of men ſeem to be *ſecure* enough from any *Trouble* or Diſcompoſure in their Minds from the Conſideration of things of this Nature, yet ſome there are who may by their own Miſapprehenſions fall under ſuch *Diſcouragements* as may hinder them in that Courſe of *Obedience* which they would purſue. I ſhall therefore divert a little, to prevent or remove the Objections which ſuch Perſons make againſt themſelves, and from whence their *Diſcouragement* doth ariſe, adding ſome *Directions* ſuited unto their State or Condition. For,

Firſt, Some may ſuppoſe themſelves ſo far intereſted in the *Backſliding* and *Apoſtaſie* deſcribed, as that the *Threatning* denounced in the Text doth belong unto them alſo; and that they are *judicially* now ſhut up under Impenitency. For, they ſay that they had attained unto a greater Meaſure or Degree of *Holineſs*, unto more Readineſs, Evenneſs and Conſtancy in the Duties of *Obedience* than they do now retain. They have fearfully and wofully fallen off from a *better Frame*, into Deadneſs,

neſs, Barrenneſs, Neglect of Duties, and it may be in ſome Inſtance into a *ſinfull Courſe*, and that for many dayes. Hence now they fear, that leſt as they are ſenſible that they have *forſaken God* and gone off from him, ſo he ſhould *forſake them* utterly, and that they ſhould be *ſealed up* under Impenitency.

Anſw. 1. As this Caſe too often falls out, ſo it is often anſwered; and I ſhall not therefore much inſiſt upon it, nor any otherwiſe but as our preſent deſign and Diſcourſe is concerned therein. And I ſay,

(1) It is to be granted, that all ſuch *Backſlidings* are not onely *evil* and *ſinfull*, but *dangerous* alſo, as to the Iſſue and Event. Whoever therefore finds himſelf under the *power* of them, or any way *overtaken* by them, ought not onely to conſider the Guilt of all the particular Sins and Omiſſions of Duties which they contract, but principally the *whole State of their Souls*, and the Danger they are in of being hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin. For no man in ſuch a State can have the leaſt *ſpiritual Aſſurance* or ſecurity, that he ſhall not fall *totally* and *finally* from God; and whatever Perſwaſion he hath of that nature, it is but a *deceiving*

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Preſumption that will effectually promote his Apoſtaſie and Ruine. For there is no Word of Truth, no Promiſe of God, to aſſure any of his Love and Favour whileſt they are in ſuch a State. It is therefore unqueſtionably the Duty of every one who is *ſenſible* of any Evil of this Nature, in the Frame of his Heart, or Courſe of his Life, to give himſelf no *Reſt* therein, ſeeing the *Eternal Welfare* of his Soul is highly in queſtion. But,

(2) There is a *Decay*, a *Falling away* from the *Degrees of Holineſs and Obedience* that Men may have attained, and that it may be for a *long ſeaſon*, and poſſibly with reſpect unto ſome *eſpecial Sin* which is *recoverable*, and which doth not caſt Perſons under the *power* of it, *abſolutely* into the Threatning here recorded. What *Circumſtances* are required hereunto, and what *Aggravations* of Sin, hath been ſhewed in the Opening of the Words. Now there may be a *falling away*, and that great and dangerous, which yet riſeth not up unto the Provocation of the Evil here in an *eſpecial manner* intended. And I judge it may be given as a ſafe Rule in General, That *he who is ſpiritually ſenſible of the Evil of his Backſliding, is unqueſtionably in a recoverable*

rable Condition; and ſome may be ſo who are not yet *ſenſible* thereof, ſo long as they are capable of being made ſo by *Convictions*. No man is paſt *Hopes* of Salvation, untill he is paſt all *Poſſibility* of Repentance. And no man is paſt all *poſſibility* of Repentance, untill he be *abſolutely* hardened againſt all *Goſpel Convictions*. Wherefore there is a *Recoverable Backſliding*. For, (1) Chriſt *calleth* men unto ſuch a *Recovery*, which therefore he approves of, and will aſſiſt them therein who conſcientiouſly apply themſelves unto their Duty, *Rev.* 2. 5. *Chap.* 3. 1, 2, 3 5 4 5 which latter Inſtance is great in this Kind. (2) God hath *promiſed* to *recover* and *heal* ſuch Backſlidings in Believers; *Hoſea* 14. 4. And unto whom this is not Encouragement ſufficient to endeavour a *Recovery* of themſelves, it is to be feared they will wax worſe and worſe through the *power* of Sin, untill it hath *full dominion* over them. Yea what Pretences ſoever they make to keep themſelves off from ſuch Endeavours, it is either *Unbelief* or the *Love of Sin* that is the ſole *proper Cauſe* thereof. Wherefore,

(3) If the *Backſliding* (whereof men complain) from the wayes of *Holineſs* and *Obedience*, have not proceeded out of *diſlike* unto

unto Chriſt and the Goſpel, if they have not by the Power and Deceit wherewith they are accompanyed, *choſen any other Way* of Duty or Sin in his ſtead; as there is all Neceſſity imaginable that they ſhould, ſo there is all Encouragement neceſſary, to put them upon the diligent uſe of all Means of a *Bleſſed Recovery*. Suppoſe their *Decayes* have befallen them, or that they have fallen into them, through the *Power of Temptations*, the Deceitfulneſs of Sin joyning with their own Sloth and Negligence, which is the higheſt Suppoſition that can be made in this Kind; yet if they ſhall ſay in their Hearts, that they *will return to their former Husband, for then it was better with them than now*; they had *Peace* and much *Refreſhment* in their *firſt Wayes* of Faith and Obedience, which they will therefore return unto; as the Lord Chriſt *calls* upon them ſo to doe, ſo he is ready in all the Promiſes of the Goſpel to *receive* them upon their ſo doing. Onely let ſuch Perſons remember, that the *Command* is urgent on them, as on *Lot* when he was to flee out of *Sodom*, and the Angel ſaid unto him, *Eſcape for thy Life, look not behind thee, neither ſtay thou in all the Plains, eſcape to the Mountains, leſt thou be conſumed.*

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There is no time of Deliberation, much leſs of Delay in this matter; it is for their *Souls*, and the preſent Moment wherein they are warned is the onely *Seaſon* for their Eſcape; And if any ſhall yet linger as *Lot* did, the Lord lay hold upon them and bring them forth by the Power of his *Grace*, that they may be delivered. What are the Wayes whereby this may be done, what Duties ſuch Perſons are with Diligence to attend unto, what Means they are to uſe; are not things which at preſent fall under our Conſideration. All that I deſign is to ſhew, that thoſe who thus complain, are not caſt under any Diſcouragement (by this *Context* and its *Expoſition*) from an Endeavour of a *Recovery*, wherein they will find Acceptance with God.

Secondly; It may be alleadged, that as to the *Iſſue* of things it will be all one whether we *fall* from *Goſpel-Holineſs*, or can never *attain* unto it; And this, ſay ſome, is Our Condition: For whatever we have thought of our ſelves, or whatever others have thought of us upon our *Profeſſion*, yet we now find by Experience that we have not *attained* the *Holineſs* which the Goſpel requires. For their *Corruptions* (they ſay, this or that it may be in particular,) are too ſtrong

ſtrong for their *Convictions*; and after they thought themſelves *above* them, they have again been *prevailed on* and overcome. They find the *power* of one or other Luſt grown ſo *habitual* unto them, that they fall again and again under the *power* of it, untill (it may be) they have loſt much of the *ſenſe* of its Guilt, and more of their *power* to reſiſt it. And it muſt be acknowledged alſo, that this Condition is *ſpiritually dangerous*, and ſuch as (if Deliverance be not obtained from,) will probably end in *total Apoſtaſie*. To ſtate things aright in this Caſe, we may obſerve,

1. That there are *three Degrees* in the Power and Prevalency of *Sin*, and it muſt be enquired under which of them they are ſuppoſed to be, concerning whom this Complaint is made. The firſt is that mentioned *Rom.* 7. 23. *I ſee a Law in my Members warring againſt the Law of my Mind, and bringing me into Captivity to the Law of Sin*: Where this is onely, or the *Captivating Power of Sin*, there are two things to be conſidered. (1) That the *Will* in its Diſpoſitions and Inclinations is conſtantly *fixed* againſt the *Power* and *Intereſt* of *Sin*, ſo that in all its Prevalency it *ſuffers* Hardſhip, and is ſenſible of its Captivity.

(2) That

(2) That this *Captivity* unto the Law of *Sin*, doth not reach unto the *outward Perpetration* of Sin, but onely the *Conflict* that is in the Mind and Affections about it. And this is a Condition which no man in this World is *abſolutely* freed from, but is in ſome meaſure or other exerciſed with it, even as the Apoſtle himſelf was, and thereon groaned for Deliverance, *ver.* 24. Another Degree of the *Prevalency of Sin* is expreſſed, *Rom.* 6. 16, 19. *Know you not that to whom you yield your ſelves ſervants to obey, his ſervants you are unto whom you obey, whether of Sin unto Death, or of Obedience unto Righteouſneſs?* There is a *State* and *prevalency* of Sin, wherein men being wholly under its Dominion do give up themſelves unto its Service willingly, notwithſtanding any Checks from Light or Conſcience they meet withall. And ſuch as theſe, the *willing Servants of Sin*, that yield up themſelves in their Affections and Members of their Bodies unto the Obedience and Service of it, we do not at preſent conſider. Between theſe there is a Degree of the *Prevalency* of *Sin*, beyond the firſt, yet falling ſhort of the latter, expreſſed 2 *Pet.* 2. 19. Men are therein in ſome ſence *Servants of Corruption*, in that they are *overcome* by it,

and

and brought into Bondage. They are not ſuch as *willingly* without any *Conteſt* or *Conflict* give up themſelves unto the Service of Sin, but they are *overcome* by it, which manifeſts that they do in ſome meaſure *ſtrive* againſt it. And on the other hand they go beyond them who complain they are *led Captives* to the Law of Sin; For they are ſaid to *become Servants to Corruption*, which the others are not in any ſence. Theſe therefore ſeem to be ſuch, and ſuch I do intend, who notwithſtanding all their *Light* and *Convictions*, with all the *Endeavors* that they uſe, are ſo far under the *power* of ſome prevalent *habitual Luſt*, as to *ſerve* it in a frequent Reiteration of *Actual Sins*.

2. If this be the *Caſe* complained of, it is acknowledged to be a Condition of *no ſmall hazard* and Danger. And he who is not deeply *ſenſible* hereof, is like him that lyeth down in the midſt of the Sea, or as he that lyeth on the Top of a Maſt; as this ſtate is at large deſcribed with reſpect unto them who *are given to Wine*; *Prov.*23.29,30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35. Wherefore, unleſs ſome *Remedy* be found out in this Caſe, it muſt be acknowledged that it will deprive men of, or keep them from any aſſured *Intereſt* in *Goſpel-Holineſs*.

I muſt not here divert to conſider in General the *Nature* and *Means* of the *Mortification of Sin*; I have done it already in other *Diſcourſes*, with the *beſt Directions* for that End which I am able to propoſe. Unto them I do referre the Perſons concerned for Guidance and Counſel where better is not at hand. Unto what hath been ſo treated already I ſhall onely adde, that thoſe who would ſecure an *Intereſt* in *Goſpel Holineſs*, by a Deliverance from the *power* of Inveterate *habitual Corruptions*, may take the enſuing Directions.

Firſt, If they have *in vain* attempted their own *Deliverance*, let them not delay to acquaint ſome *able Spiritual Guide* with their State and Condition. This ſometimes hath broken, defeated, and ſcattered at once the *Forces of Sin* in the Soul, where in its own Wiſdom and Strength it was no way able to *conflict* with it. And it is the *Ordinance of God* to this purpoſe; *Jam.* 5. 16. *Confeſs your Faults one to another*, &c. It was no ſmall Effect of the Craft of *Sathan*, ſo to abuſe this Ordinance of God by turning it into a *neceſſary Confeſſion* of all Sin unto *a Prieſt*, inveſted with Power of *Abſolution*, which was attended with innumerable Evils, and proved an effectual

Engine

Engine for the Ruine of the *Souls* of Men, to keep them off from that Benefit which the due uſe of it was deſigned to adminiſter unto Sinners. If therefore any have found that Sin *hath* been, and yet *is too ſtrong* for them, and that *that* is come upon them which the Wiſe man mentions, *Woe unto him that is alone*; let them addreſs themſelves for Advice unto ſuch as have *the Tongue of the Learned*, to ſpeak a Word *in ſeaſon* unto them that are *weary* and ready to *faint*, and they will find Relief; God will *diſcover* that Evil of this kind, which Men will *hide* to their own Diſadvantage. He will lay open thoſe *feſtered Wounds* which men would cover untill *Rottenneſs* enter into their Bones.

Secondly, The *Effect* aimed at will never be Accompliſhed without *Violence* offered unto *our ſelves* as unto all Occaſions of Sin, namely, as to the *particular Corruption* ſuppoſed prevalent. In this Caſe, when known Occaſions of the Excitation or Actings of the Evil complained of do occurre, no Deliberations or Inclinations or Civil Complyances are once to be admitted. *Violence* and ſuddain Executions of fore-taken Reſolves without any Parly or Debate, are to be purſued. This is the Condition where-

in our Saviours Advice muſt take place, if we intend to eſcape; namely, of *pulling out a Right Eye*, and *cutting off a Right Hand*; *Math.* 5. 29, 30; which cannot be done without offering Violence unto our Affections and Inclinations. This is the Meaning of the Counſel given, *Prov.* 4. 14, 15. *Enter not into the Path of the Wicked, and goe not in the Way of evil men; avoyd it, paſs not by it, turn from it and paſs away.* The Multiplication of the Expreſſions wherein the Duty charged doth conſiſt, do intimate that in the Obedience required in this particular, a Reſolution acted with an *holy Violence* is required. And there are three things in this *holy Violence* with reſpect unto the *Occaſions* of a *prevalent Corruption.*

(1) The *Minds Rejection* of their *firſt Solicitations.* When ſuch *Seaſons* do befall, or are befalling any Man, wherein his Luſt or Sin hath wonted to act it ſelf, they *ſmile* on one another, and are ready to ſhake hands in Folly. *Pſal.* 50. 18. *Prov.* 23. 31. And ſundry things will preſent themſelves unto the *Mind* to render the Occaſion *neceſſary*, or at leaſt not *dangerous.* But if all *Inſinuation* of that kind be not immediately *rejected* without Parly or Delay, the Soul

Soul probably will be again entangled and overcome.

(2) A *ſtated Satisfaction* concerning the Folly of *Reſerves* although the *Occaſion* ſhould be complyed withall or embraced, ſo as that the Mind will hear no more of them under any Pretence whatever. Such *Reſerves* will offer themſelves, that although a Man proceed ſo far, or ſo far in the Gratification of his preſent *Inclinations*, yet he will put *a ſtop* unto or *avoyd* what they may lead unto. When the Mind is fully poſſeſſed of the *Deceitfulneſs* of the *Heart* in this matter, it will ſee its own Folly in liſtening after ſuch falſe Promiſes or Reſerves, and reject the firſt Thoughts of them with Indignation.

(3) *Local Mutation*, or avoyding the *Place* it ſelf, or *Society* and *Company*, with an holy Force put upon the Affections, where ſuch Occaſions are offered. This is that which is ſo expreſſed and preſſed on us in the Place before mentioned, *Prov.* 4. 14, 15.

Theſe things belong unto that *holy Violence* which men are to uſe unto themſelves, and muſt uſe if ever they intend to be freed from the Power of an *habitually* prevalent Corruption. And thoſe

who judge their Deliverance not to be worth this *Watchfulneſs* and Care, will live and dye under the *power* of Sin.

Thirdly, *Conſtancy in private Prayer* againſt the *power* of ſuch a Corruption. This is all the way a Man hath to deal with God about ſuch an Evil. For ſuch things are to be thought and ſpoken, ſuch Circumſtances to be inſiſted on, and ſuch Pleas to be uſed, as are not meet to be communicated to or with others. And for the moſt part it will be found, that conſtant, earneſt, faithfull *private Prayer*, and any *ſtrong Corruption*, will be like *Moſes* and *Amaleck*. When *Moſes* his Hands were down, *Amaleck* prevailed; but when they were lifted up, *Iſrael* had the upper hand. And if a Man engages into *eſpeccial Prayer*, in oppoſition unto any Sin or Corruption, whatever he thinks of his own Reſolutions, whatever Confidence he hath in his Purpoſes, as he begins to fail or faint in the Conſtancy or Fervency of that Duty, ſo his Sin gets Strength in him, and will not fail to attempt him ſucceſſefully on the next Occaſion. Nor will the utmoſt Effect of any mans Wiſdom, or Care, or Ability, work out his Deliverance in this Caſe, without a Conſcientious

tious Attendance unto, and Discharge of their *Duty*.

Sundry other things of an alike Nature unto these might be insisted on, but that I must not too far digress from my *principal Design*. This I thought meet to interpose for the Direction of such as may be kept off from a successefull Endeavour *to perfect Holiness in the Fear of the Lord*.

CHAP. XIII.

Directions to avoyd the Power of a prevailing Apoſtaſie.

UNto the *Warnings* given in the precedent *Chapter* ſome *Directions* may be added, perhaps not unuſefull unto them who would be preſerved from the Occaſions, Cauſes and Danger of the *Apoſtaſie* thus far enquired into. For although (as hath been declared,) a *watchfull Attendance unto all Goſpel Duties, and a vigorous Exerciſe of all Goſpel Graces in general* are required unto our Preſervation, yet there are ſome things which have an eſpecial Reſpect unto the preſent State of the *Cauſes* and *Circumſtances* of the Evil inſiſted on, which ought in an eſpecial manner to be remembred. And that things of this Nature are by many *deſpiſed*, is no Argument why we ſhould not be *diligent* in our Attendance unto them. For if they are ſuch things as the Scripture preſcribeth

ſcribeth in the like Caſes, the Contempt of them proceeds onely from that Pride and Security which are no ſmall part of the *Apoſtaſie* complained of.

Our Firſt Direction of this kind is, that we ſhould *all labour for a true real ſence of the Concernment of the Glory of God in this matter*, and what is *our Duty* with reſpect thereunto. Where this is not, Men are under the *power* of that Security which is the *broad Way* and *wide Gate* leading into Apoſtaſie. Yea where this is not the *firſt* and *principal* thing wherewith we are affected in any Evil that falls out in the World, our Hearts are not upright in what we profeſs.

When God threatned to diſinherit the *Iſraelites*, and deſtroy the whole Congregation as one Man in the Wilderneſs, becauſe of their provoking Rebellion; that wherewith *Moſes* in all the Circumſtances of his *Relation* unto them and *Intereſt* in them was affected withall, was, the Concernment of the *Glory* and *Name* of God therein; *Numb.* 14. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18. And it was ſo with *Joſhua* in the Sin and Puniſhment of the ſame People. *What wilt thou doe* (ſaith he) *unto thy great Name*; *Joſh.* 7. 9. Words which have been made a publick

publick Deriſion in the dayes wherein we live.

We cannot but have Thoughts about theſe things, for they are the common Subject of many Mens Diſcourſe. But if our Thoughts about them are confined unto a *narrow Compaſs*, and ſo that it be well with us and ſome few others in whom we are peculiarly concerned, the Evil that is come on the World in other places, is lightly ſet by; if we are ſenſible of no Intereſt of the *Glory of God*, of the *Honour of Chriſt* and the *Goſpel* therein, or are Regardleſs of them, we are ſcarce likely to be delivered from that fatal Iſſue whereunto all theſe things are in an open Tendency.

Is it nothing unto us that *ſo many Nations* in the World where the *Profeſſion* of *the Goſpel*, and an avowed Subjection of Soul and Conſcience unto Jeſus Chriſt did flouriſh for ſome Ages, are now utterly over-run with *Mahumetiſme*, *Paganiſme*, and *Atheiſme*? Do we ſuppoſe theſe things are fallen out by *Chance*, or come to paſs by a *fatal Revolution* of Affairs, ſuch as all things in this World are obnoxious unto? Did ever any Nation or People under Heaven *loſe the Goſpel* as unto its *Profeſſion*, who did not firſt reject it as unto its *Power*, *Purity*,

Purity, and *Obedience?* And is not the *Glory of God*, is not the *Honour of Chriſt* peculiarly concerned herein?

Is it nothing unto us, that innumerable Souls who yet continue to make an *outward Profeſſion* of the Name of Chriſt, have ſo degenerated from the *Myſtery*, *Holineſs* and *Worſhip* of the Goſpel, as to provoke the Holy God to give them up for ſo many Generations unto the moſt wofull *Bondage* and *Slavery* that ever any of the Children of men were caſt under from the Foundation of the World, without the leaſt Hopes or Appearance of Relief? And is it not to be bewailed, that ſuch is the *power* of that *Apoſtaſie* which brought all this Evil upon them, as that they have not to this day *accepted of the Puniſhment of their Sins*, nor been bettered by all that they have undergone? And doth not that Holy Name whereby we are called ſuffer in theſe things? Is it not on their Account Evil ſpoken of? For do not the *Miſeries*, the long continued wofull *Calamities* and Oppreſſions of innumerable Multitudes, of great Nations, *outwardly Profeſſing the Chriſtian Religion*, become a ſnare to the World, and a Temptation againſt the *Truth* of the *Goſpel*, and the *Power* of *Jeſus Chriſt?*

The

The *Jews* themſelves are not left unto more *Diſtreſſes*, nor more deſtitute of any *pledges* of *divine Protection*, nor are more *unreformed* under their Miſeries, than many who are called *Chriſtians*, upon the Account of their *Apoſtaſie* from the *Goſpel*. It is true, *great Diſtreſſes*, and *ſore Perſecutions* may befall the Church in its *beſt State* and *Condition*; But then doth God ſo diſpoſe of all things, as that their Trials ſhall evidently tend both unto his *own Glory* and their *ſpiritual Advantage* who are exerciſed with them. And in the Iſſue the *Goſpel* it ſelf ſhall never be a Loſer by the *ſuffering* of its *ſincere Profeſſors*. But in thoſe horrible *Judgements* which have befallen many parts of the *Apoſtatized Chriſtian World*, nothing offereth it ſelf unto our Minds but what is matter of *Lamentation* and *Temptation*.

Is it nothing to us that the greateſt Number of thoſe who are *called Chriſtians* and enjoy Proſperity in the World, do live in *open Idolatry*, to the unſpeakable Scandal of *Chriſtian Religion*, and eminent Danger unto *themſelves* of *Eternal Ruine?* Nothing that ſo many do openly renounce the *humble meek Spirit* of *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel*, endeavouring to *perſecute*, *ruine* and *deſtroy* other Chriſtians perhaps *better* than themſelves,

ſelves, becauſe they cannot captivate their *Souls* and *Conſciences* in Obedience unto their *Impoſitions?* Nothing to ſee and hear of all thoſe *dreadfull Effects* of this *Apoſtaſie* in all manner of *Outragious Sins* that the World is filled withall?

Certainly if we are not greatly *affected* with theſe things, if our Souls *mourn* not *in ſecret* about them, if we are not ſolicitous about the *ſmall Remainders* of the Intereſt of *Truth* and *Holineſs* in the World, we are in no ſmall *danger* our ſelves of being (one time or other) carryed away with the Deluge.

If we are ſenſible of the Concernment of the *Glory of God* in theſe things, it may not be amiſs to conſider *What is our Duty* with reſpect thereunto.

And the *firſt* thing required of us, is, that *we mourn in ſecret* for that *ſad Iſſue* which the Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity* is come unto in the World. God puts an *eſpecial Mark* on them who *mourn for the Prevalency of Sin*, and the *Apoſtaſie of the Church* in any Seaſon. *Ezek.* 9. 4. Neither will he have regard unto any others when he comes to execute Judgements on *ungodly Apoſtates*. Men may *ſuffer* with them, with whom they will not *ſin*. For where we are unconcerned for the

Sins

Sins of men, we ſhall not be ſo in their *Sufferings*. It is therefore thoſe alone who out of a ſenſe of the *diſhonour* of God, and *compaſſion* towards the Souls of periſhing Sinners, do *ſigh* and *cry* over *theſe Abominations*, that ſhall be either *preſerved* from thoſe *publick Calamities* wherein they may iſſue, or be comfortably *ſupported* under them. And there is nothing of a more *Ominous preſage* that things are yet *waxing worſe*, than that general *Regardleſneſs* about them that is among the Beſt of us. Whoſe Eyes *run down with Waters* becauſe *Men keep not the Law?* Who doth ſufficiently bewail the Decayes of *Faith*, *Truth* and *Holineſs* that are in the Earth? Moſt men (like *Gallio*) either *care for none of theſe things*, or at beſt, *deſign* to *ſave their own Houſes* in the *general Conflagration*. Many meaſure all things by their *own Advantage*, and can ſee nothing amiſs in the Profeſſion of *Religion*, but onely in the *Complaints* that any things are ſo. And although the *Degeneracy* of *Chriſtianity* in the preſent Profeſſors of it be grown a *common Theam* in the Mouths of moſt, yet very few are *affected* with it in a due Manner in their Hearts.

Secondly; It is in *this ſtate of things* required of us to *Pray continually*, pleading thoſe

thoſe Promiſes which are Recorded in the Word of God for the Reſtauration of the *priſtine Glory*, *Power* and *Purity* of *Chriſtian Religion*. This was the Way and Means whereby the Church was recovered of Old; and the ſame Duty is ſtill enjoyned unto us, *Iſa.* 62. 6, 7. And hereunto are all our preſent Hopes reduced. There is nothing too hard for God. If He will *work* herein none ſhall *lett him*. Things are not gone beyond *his Cure*. He can ſend *Peace* and *Truth* and *Righteouſneſs* from *above*, and cauſe them to *prevail* on the Earth. Were all things left abſolutely unto the *Wills* of *Men* in that *depraved ſtate* whereunto they are arrived in the World, nothing but an *Encreaſe* of overſpreading *Abominations* might be expected. *Soveraign and Effectual Grace* can yet give Relief, and nothing elſe can ſo doe. *Truely in vain is Salvation hoped for from the Hills and the multitude of Mountains, truely in the Lord our God is the Salvation of Iſrael.* But for all theſe things will God be ſought unto. And *Conſtancy* in this Duty for others, out of a deep *ſence* of the Concernment of the *Glory of God*, and *Zeal* for the *Honour* of the *Goſpel*, is the moſt *Effectual Means* of our own Deliverance and Preſervation.

Thirdly; *Conſtancy in our Teſtimony* againſt the

the *prevalency* of this *Apoſtaſie*, is required of us. And hereof there are two parts. (1) An *open avowed Profeſſion* of, and *contending* for the *Faith* and *Truth* of the *Goſpel*. The *publick Contempt* and *ſcorn* that is by a *prevalent Vogue* caſt on ſome *important Evangelical Truths*, is ready to diſcourage many from the *owning* and *profeſſion* of them. Men for the moſt part have ſo many things to take into Conſideration before they will undertake the *Defence* of the *Truth*, that they can find no *Seaſon* for it, whileſt *noyſome Errors* are vented every day with *confidence* and *diligence*. It is therefore Now (if ever) a Time for all thoſe in whoſe *Hearts are the Wayes of God*, to *contend earneſtly for the Faith once delivered unto the Saints*. And if either Sloth or Self-love, or carnal Fears, or Earthly Ambitious Deſigns, do *betray* any into a *Neglect* of their *Duty* in this matter, it will at one time or other give them *diſquietment* and *trouble*. But (2) *Exemplary Holineſs*, *Righteouſneſs*, and *Fruitfulneſs in good Works*, belong unto this *Teſtimony* againſt the *prevalent Apoſtaſie* which is required of us. As this is our *conſtant Duty* at all times, ſo the Progreſs of the *fatal evil* complained of, renders the *doubling* of our *diligence* herein at preſent neceſſary, and puts a Luſtre on it. Second-

Secondly; Thoſe who would be *preſerved* in ſuch a Seaſon, muſt *keep a due and carefull Watch over their own Hearts*, with reſpect unto their *Duty* and *Danger*. For although *Temptations* do abound, and thoſe attended with all ſorts of Circumſtances encreaſing their *Efficacy*, and the Outward Means and Cauſes of this Evil are multiplyed, yet the *Beginnings* of all mens ſpiritual Declenſions are in their own *Hearts* and *Spirits*. For the *different Effects* that theſe things have upon the *Minds* and *Lives* of Men, is principally from themſelves. As they are carefull, diligent and watchfull over themſelves in a way of *Duty* on the one hand, or ſlothfull, careleſs, negligent on the other, ſo are they *preſerved* or *prevailed* againſt. The Advice therefore I intend, is that given by the Holy Ghoſt in this Caſe, *Prov.* 4. 23. *Keep thy Heart with all diligence, for out of it are the Iſſues of Life*; or as it is Emphatically expreſſed in the Original, *Above all Keeping, keep thy Heart*. The greateſt Exerciſe of men in the World, is about *keeping what they have*, what they eſteem *their own*, wherewith the Deſire of *adding* unto it, is of the ſame Nature. What belongeth hereunto, What *Care*, what *Watchfulneſs*, what *Diligence*, what Exerciſe of their *utmoſt Wiſdom*

and *Induſtry*, all men know; unleſs it be ſuch as by the *power* of their *Luſts* are given up unto *Prodigality* and Profuſeneſs. But the Care and Diligence in *keeping of our Hearts*, (the *Holy Ghoſt* being Judge) ought to exceed whatever of that kind is employed about other things. And it is too evident, that there is much want of this *wiſdom* amongſt us in the *World*. Of all things, the *leaſt Diligence* is uſed by many in *keeping of their Hearts*. So they can *ſafeguard* their other *Concerns*, the *Heart* may be left to take its own Courſe. Yea the *Heart* is never ſo much *neglected* uſually, nor more *loſt* than in the uſe it is put unto in *keeping other things*; for whileſt it is employed to *keep* our Lives, to keep the World, and the things of it, it *is loſt* it ſelf in Worldlineſs, Covetouſneſs, carnal Wiſdom, Negligence of holy Duties, and Barrenneſs in the Fruits of Righteouſneſs. That this is no good Bargain, that nothing is got hereby, yea that all will be *loſt* by it at laſt, *Heart* and *World* and every thing wherein we are concerned, the *Holy Ghoſt* plainly intimates in this *Direction*, wherein we are commanded above all things to *keep our Hearts*. And we are not onely laid under this *command*, but a *cogent Reaſon* is added to enforce our Obedience;

For

For out of it are the Iſſues of Life. Hereon do all *Events* depend; The *Heart* being *kept*, the whole Courſe of *our Life* here will be according unto the *Mind* of God, and the End of it will be the Enjoyment of Him hereafter. This being neglected, *Life* will be *loſt*, both here as unto *Obedience*, and hereafter as unto *Glory*. This therefore is that which in the firſt place is to be applyed unto the preſent Caſe. Would any not be overtaken with the *power* and *prevalency* of any of the *Cauſes* of *Apoſtaſie* mentioned before, let them look well unto their *own Hearts*, ſeeing that from thence are *the Iſſues of Life*.

By the *Heart* the Scripture underſtandeth all the *Faculties* of our *Souls* as they are an intire *rational Principle* of all *Moral* and *Spiritual Operations*; and ſo do we alſo. The *preſervation* of them in their *due Order*, acting in all things according unto their *diſtinct Powers* and the *Duty* of the *whole Soul* with reſpect unto *God*, is that which is intended by this *keeping of the Heart*; And hereunto with reference unto the *preſent duty* ſundry things do belong in an eſpecial manner: As,

(1) That the *Heart* be kept *awake and attentive unto its own Deceitfulneſs*. The

Wiſe man tells us, that *he that truſteth in his own Heart is a Fool*; *Prov.* 28. 26. The Beginning of all *Security* (which is an aſſured Entrance into all Evil) lyes in Mens leaving their Hearts unto themſelves and *truſting* in them. He is no *wiſe man* (the *Holy Ghoſt* being Judge) who after ſo many Inſtructions and Warnings given us in the *Scripture*, of the *Deceitfulneſs of our Hearts*, or the *Deceitfulneſs* of that *Sin* which is bound up in them, (which is all one,) will careleſſely truſt them with their *Eternal Concernments*. The Apoſtle *Peter* did ſo once upon a ſtrong Confidence that his *Heart* would not fail him; but we know what was the Iſſue of it. It is apt to be ſo with moſt men in this matter. They think and do really judge, that if all men ſhould *fall off* and *forſake* the Goſpel, either *wholly* or as unto the *degrees* in *Obedience* which they have attained, yet *they* would not ſo doe. But all things are filled with *viſible Examples* of their Diſappointments. There are no *Apoſtates* but once thought they would not be ſo. For we ſpeak onely of them who had *Light* into and *Conviction* of their *Duty*, and who had therefore neceſſarily *Reſolutions* to continue therein. Wherefore, a conſtant watchfull *Jealouſie* over our own Hearts as to their

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Deceitfulneſs, their Readineſs to be impoſed on, and ſecret Pretences to countenance themſelves in complyance with *Temptations*, is the *Foundation* of all other Duties neceſſary unto our Preſervation.

Even this alſo is by ſome deſpiſed. They know of *no deceitfulneſs in their own Hearts*, nor think there is any ſuch thing in the Hearts of others. They cannot but acknowledge that there is mutual *Deceit* enough amongſt Mankind in the World; but that there ſhould be *Deceit and Treachery in Mens Hearts* with reſpect unto themſelves, their own Actions, Duties and Wayes; with reſpect unto God and their own Eternal Condition, *that* they cannot apprehend. For, what or whom ſhould a Man truſt unto, if he may not ſafely repoſe his Confidence in *his own Heart*, that it will be alwayes true unto its *ſpiritual* and *eternal* Intereſt? Happy Men, were ſuch Apprehenſions as theſe to be the Rule of their *preſent Duty* or *future Judgement*. But is it not poſſible there may be in the Hearts of men a blind *Self-love*, ſo far predominant as practically to impoſe falſe Apprehenſions and Notions of things upon the *Mind* and *Affections*, with reſpect unto *Sin* and *Duty*? Is there no *Diſorder* in the Faculties of our

Souls, nor *Confuſion* in their Operations thereon? Are there *no Remainders* of Sin inſeparable from them in this Life, accompanyed with all manner of ſpiritual Deceitfulneſs? No *corrupt Reaſonings* for the Procraſtination of the moſt important Duties? No *Inclinations* unto undue Prefidences and Preſumptions? No *Vanity* or *Uncertainty* in the Mind? Or can theſe things (with the like innumerable) be ſuppoſed without any Deceit in them or accompanying of them? What one ſaid of Old to the *Druides*,

Solis nôſſe Deos & Cœli Numina vobis
Aut Solis neſcire datum.———

may be applyed unto the men of this Perſwaſion; either they *alone Know the State of the Heart of Man with reſpect unto God, Evangelical Obedience and their own Eternal Intereſt, or they alone are Ignorant thereof.* Untill therefore we have more Satisfaction in this novel pretended Diſcovery, we dare not ceaſe the preſſing of Men to be *diligently* attentive unto the *Deceits* of their own Hearts. If this be neglected, we ſhall labour in vain, whatever elſe we doe. Bleſſed is he who thus *feareth alwayes*. This will make men

men carefully and conſcientiouſly avoyd all *Occaſions* of all things, whether in their *inward Frames* or *outward Practice*, that may on any account have a Tendency unto a *Declenſion* from the Goſpel. A bold, hazardous, careleſs Frame of Spirit, venturing on all *Companyes* and *Temptations*, complying with *Vanities* and prophane *Communication*, offering it ſelf with a *fearleſs Confidence* unto Wayes of *Seduction*, through the cunning Sleights of Men that *lye in wait to deceive*; is that which hath ruined innumerable Profeſſors. Self-diſtruſt, Humility, Fear of offending, with the like *Soul-preſerving Graces*, will be kept up unto Exerciſe onely where men are *awake* unto the Conſideration of the *Deceitfulneſs* of their own Hearts.

(2) We muſt keep our *Heart awake and attentive unto its Help and Relief.* And this lyes onely in *Chriſt Jeſus* the Captain of our Salvation. After all *Peters* Confidence, it was the *Interpoſition* of Chriſt alone that preſerved him from utter Ruine; *I have prayed for thee that thy Faith fail not.* And if any can once prevail ſo far as to deterre men from looking for all ſpiritual Help and Relief from Chriſt, for daily *ſupplyes* of Grace and Strength from him alone; from a con-

tinual Application unto him, for directing, aſſiſting, preſerving, eſtabliſhing Grace, (which they variouſly attempt,) there is no need to fear, but they will eaſily follow them into whatever elſe, either they or Sathan, or the World ſhall have a mind to draw them. But in all our *Diſcourſes* we proceed on other Principles. We look on Jeſus *Chriſt* as the *Spring and Fountain* of all *Grace*, as He who alone is able to preſerve us in *Faith* and *Obedience*, and doth communicate ſupplyes of *effectual Grace* unto Believers for that purpoſe. Unto him therefore are we to make our Applications continually by *Faith* and *Prayer* for our Preſervation, as we are directed, *Heb.* 4. 15, 16. It is He alone who can *keep us from the Hour of Temptation which is come upon all the World, to trye them that dwell on the Earth*; *Rev.* 3. 10. Whoſoever therefore would be kept from the *power* of the Temptations unto Apoſtaſie, which every way encompaſs us, and threaten to bear down all before them, let them keep their *Hearts* continually attentive unto their onely Help and Relief. Thoſe who have not taken in a *ſence* of their *danger*, will ſee little Reaſon to concern themſelves in theſe *Directions*. But as for ſuch as are affected with the viſible Ruine of Multitudes, and

their

their own apparent Hazard, from prevailing *Cauſes* and innumerable *Occaſions* thereof, whoſe Eyes are in any meaſure opened to ſee the *general Inclination* that is in the World unto a *Relinquiſhment* of all the *principal Concerns* of the *Goſpel*, by what various *wayes* that Inclination is furthered, followed and purſued, will not think it unneedfull to be minded of an Help and Refuge whereunto they may betake themſelves and be preſerved.

(3) Let the *Heart* be kept *attentive* unto its *own Frames*, its Progreſs or Decayes in *Holineſs*. How ſecret, and even oft-times *imperceptible* the Beginnings of ſpiritual *Declenſions* are in many, with the Reaſons and Cauſes thereof, hath been declared in our *Expoſition* of *Heb.* 4. *ver.* 12, 13. whither the Reader is referred. I ſhall here onely offer, that he who in ſuch a Seaſon as that which is paſſing over us, doth not often *call himſelf unto an account* how things ſtand with him as to the *inner Man*; what is the State of his *ſpiritual Life*, whether his *Faith* and *Love* do thrive or decay, whether *God* or the *World* get ground in his Affections, will be expoſed unto more *dangers* than it may be he is readily able to deliver himſelf from. Theſe things are all of them *uſefull*, yea

yea *needfull* unto the Courſe of our Obedience at all times. That which is here intended is, their *exerciſe* and *diſcharge* with reſpect unto the Evil and Danger under Conſideration. When we have done the *utmoſt* of our Duty, we ſhall have cauſe to rejoyce in the *Grace of God* if we are preſerved and delivered. But if we be found *ſlothfull*, *negligent* and *ſecure*, what Hopes can we have that we ſhall *withſtand* the Evil that doth on every ſide beſet us? There is not any Way of *Fraud* or *Force* wherein we either *are* not or *may* not be aſſaulted. The ſecret Wayes whereby this *Apoſtaſie* puts forth its Efficacy, are ſo variousas not to be enumerated. The Current, furthered by the Winds of all ſorts of Temptations, lyes ſtrongly againſt us. New Acceſſions are made unto it every day. New Pretences againſt the *Truths* and *Holineſs* of the *Goſpel* are ſought out and made uſe of. By ſome they are ſecretly undermined, by others openly deſpiſed; and the *hand of Sathan* is in all theſe things. If we ſhould now *neglect* a watchfull *care* over our own Hearts, and a diligent Attendance unto all Means of their Preſervation in *ſoundneſs* of *Doctrine* and *holineſs* of *Life*, what Aſſurance can we have that we ſhall finally eſcape?

Having

Having premiſed theſe *Directions* in *general*, thoſe which enſue muſt have a *particular* reſpect unto ſome of the eſpecial *wayes* and *means* whereby this Declenſion hath been carried on and promoted, peculiarly ſuch as the *preſent Age and Seaſon* are moſt obnoxious unto. And becauſe this *Diſcourſe* is drawn forth to a length beyond my firſt Deſign, I ſhall name a few things onely to intimate of what ſort thoſe *Directions* are which might be more largely inſiſted on. And two only ſhall be named; wherefore,

Thirdly, *Take heed of Reſting in or Truſting unto the outward Priviledges of the Church*, and a *participation* of the *Diſpenſation* of the *Ordinances* of the *Goſpel* therein. It is known what various Apprehenſions as to the eſpecial Wayes of *outward ſolemn Worſhip* and the *State of the Church*, there are among all ſorts of Men. But whereas all men do approve of and adhere unto *one Church-ſtate* or other, one way of Worſhip or other, I intend no one more than another in particular, but would ſpeak unto all with reſpect unto *that Way* which themſelves do approve and practiſe. And it was before declared, how greatly the World was deluded by a *Pretence* of them. And we may not think to excuſe

excuſe the Neceſſity of *Watchfulneſs* in this matter, becauſe all the good things of the Church, and all the Ordinances of the Goſpel were then *abuſed*, *corrupted* and *defiled*, whereas we now all of us (in our own Apprehenſions) enjoy their Adminiſtration in *purity*, according unto the Inſtitution of *Chriſt*. For they are all of them no leſs liable to be abuſed in this kind, when duely Adminiſtred, than when moſt corrupted. Yea in ſome Caſes they are more apt ſo to be, ſeeing there is a greater appearance of *Reaſon* why we ſhould place our *confidence* in them.

It is indeed an eſpecial Mercy for any to be entruſted with the *Priviledges* of the Church, and *Inſtitutions* of the Goſpel. Yea it is the greateſt outward Dignity and Preheminence that any can be advanced unto in this World, however by the moſt it be lightly ſet by. *Theodoſius*, one of the greateſt Emperours that ever were in the World, affirmed that he eſteemed his being *a Member of the Church* a greater Dignity than his *Imperial Crown*. And although the Ruine of the *Jews* aroſe principally from their carnal Confidence in their *ſpiritual* or *Church Priviledges*, yet the Apoſtle doth acknowledge that they had great Preheminence and Advantage

vantage, and might have had great Profit thereby, *Rom.* 3. 1, 2. *Chap.* 9. 4. And theirs muſt be granted more Excellent in every kind, who enjoy that Adminiſtration of Holy Things, in compariſon whereof that committed unto the *Jews* had neither *Beauty* nor *Glory*; 2 *Cor.* 3. 10. By whomſoever therefore theſe things are *deſpiſed* or *neglected*, under whatever Pretences they countenance themſelves, they are utter *ſtrangers* unto Goſpel Holineſs. For what Holineſs can there be where men live in an *open diſobedience unto the Commands of Chriſt*, and a Neglect of the *uſe* of thoſe Means which he hath appointed to *beget* and *preſerve* it in our Souls? Nothing therefore muſt be ſpoken to take off from the *Excellency*, *Dignity* and *Neceſſity* of the *Priviledges* and *Ordinances* of the Church, when we would call off men from placing that Confidence in them which may tend unto their Diſadvantage. And if Perſons can find no *Medium* between *rejecting* all the Ordinances of the Goſpel, and *truſting* unto the outward Performance or Celebration of them, they have nothing but their own Darkneſs, Pride and Unbelief to aſcribe the Ruine of their Souls unto.

Again; There is not any thing in the whole

whole Courſe of our Obedience wherein the continual Exerciſe of *Faith and ſpiritual Wiſdom* with *Diligence* and *Watchfulneſs* is more indiſpenſibly required than it is unto the due Uſe and Improvement of Goſpel Priviledges and Ordinances; for there is no other part of our Duty, whereon our *giving Glory to God*, and the *Eternal Concern* of our own Souls do more eminently depend. And He is a ſpiritually thriving Chriſtian who knows how duely to Improve *Goſpel Inſtitutions* of Worſhip, and doth ſo accordingly. For they are the onely ordinary Outward Means whereby the Lord Chriſt communicates of his Grace unto us, and whereby we immediately return Love, Praiſe, Thanks, and Obedience unto him; in which ſpiritual Entercourſe the Actings of our ſpiritual Life principally do conſiſt, and whereon by Conſequence its *Growth* doth depend. It is therefore certain, that our Growth or Decay in *Holineſs*, our Steadfaſtneſs in or *Apoſtaſie* from Profeſſion, are greatly influenced by the *uſe* or *abuſe* of theſe Priviledges.

That therefore which in complyance with my preſent Deſign I intend, is onely a *Warning* that we doe not *reſt in theſe Things*, the Name, Title, Priviledge, and out-

outward Obſervance of them; ſeeing ſo many have thereby been deluded into Security and Apoſtaſie. Some there are, (and of them not a few) all whoſe Religion conſiſts in *going to Church*, and abiding there during the celebration of that ſort of *Worſhip* which they approve of. Herewith they ſatisfie their Conſciences as unto all that they have to doe with God, eſpecially if they are admitted unto a participation of the Sacraments in the appointed Seaſons. And many others (it is to be feared) content themſelves with a bare *hearing of the Word*, and do treat their Conſciences into a *quietneſs* and *ſecurity* thereby. It were otherwiſe impoſſible that among ſo great Multitudes as crowd after the *preaching* of the *Word*, ſo few ſhould be wrought over unto ſincere and univerſal Obedience. But I intend thoſe in particular who make a *Profeſſion* of giving themſelves up unto *Goſpel Obedience*, and are thereon made Partakers of all *Goſpel Priviledges* according to the Rule. Let them take heed that they do not too much *reſt* in, nor too much *truſt* unto theſe *outward things*; For ſo they may doe ſundry wayes unto their diſadvantage.

Firſt; Men may herein deceive themſelves *by Spiritual Gifts*, which may be reckoned

koned in the *firſt* place among the Priviledges of the Church. Some reſt in the Gifts of *others*, and the Satisfaction they receive thereby. For by the *uſe* and *exerciſe* of them mens *Affections* may be greatly moved, as alſo *temporary Faith* and *evanid Joy* be greatly excited. Theſe things, it is to be feared, ſome *live* upon, without further care after a *ſpring of living Water* in themſelves. Others may reſt in their own Gifts, their Light, Knowledge, Ability to *pray* or *ſpeak* of the things of God. But it is the Deſign of the Apoſtle, in the Context before inſiſted on to declare, that the moſt eminent *ſpiritual Gifts* with all their Effects, either in the *Souls* or *Lives* of them who are made Partakers of them, or in the *Church* for *Edification*, will not ſecure any Perſons from *total Apoſtaſie*; ſo alſo ſome ſhall be utterly rejected at the laſt Day, who were able to plead their *Propheſying and caſting out Devils* in the Name of Chriſt, and that in His Name they had *done many wondrous Works*, *Math.* 7. 22, 23. And therefore when his Diſciples (who were *true*, but as yet *weak* Believers,) were *greatly affected* (and it may be *lifted up*) with the ſucceſs they had in *caſting out of Devils* in his Name, he recalls them from any Confidence therein, as unto their *Eternal Concernment*,

cernment, unto a *truſt* in Gods *free Electing Grace*, with the Fruits thereof; *Luke* 10.20. And the Reaſon hereof is, becauſe theſe *Gifts* have no inſeparable Relation unto any of the eſpecial and peculiar *Cauſes* of Salvation. That which ſeemeth to be of any difficulty, is, that they are an *eſpecial Fruit* of the *Mediation of Chriſt*, purchaſed by his *Death*, given into his Power upon his *Reſurrection*, and firſt communicated on his *Aſcenſion*. But all that followeth from hence is, that they are *good and holy in themſelves*, and deſigned unto *good and holy Ends* or *Uſes*, namely, the *Confirmation* of the Goſpel, and *Edification* of the Church. But it doth not thence follow that they are *ſaving* unto them that do receive them, unleſs they are accompanyed with *eſpecial Grace* towards them, and *holy Obedience* in them, from both which they are ſeparable. It is therefore greatly incumbent on all thoſe who have received of theſe *ſpiritual Gifts*, to take care they be enlivened and acted by *eſpecial Grace*. For if they are not carefull they will give them a Pretence and Apprehenſion of what they *have not*, and ſet a greater Luſtre upon what *they have*, than it doth deſerve. For in their Actings, becauſe the Objects of them are *ſpiritual* and *heavenly things*, the

 ſame

ſame with that of *eſpecial Grace*, men are apt to ſuppoſe that Grace is exerciſed when it may be far from them; And as to the Profeſſion that men make, theſe *Gifts* will ſet it off with that Beauty as ſhall render it very acceptable unto others, and very well-pleaſing unto themſelves. Both theſe tend evidently unto the Ruine of the Souls of Men, if not *wiſely* managed and improved. Wherefore, by the way, to help us unto a right Judgement in this matter, we may obſerve one certain difference between the Operations of *ſpiritual Gifts* which are ſolitarily ſo on the one hand, and *ſaving Grace* on the other. Gifts have their *eſpecial Works* which they are confined unto, according as their *eſpecial Nature* is. *In* them they act vigorouſly, *out* of them they influence not the Soul at all. But the work of *ſaving Grace* is *univerſal*, equally reſpecting all Times, Occaſions, Seaſons and Duties. And although it may be acted more eminently at one Time than another, in one Inſtance of Duty than another, yet it enliveneth and diſpoſeth the Heart alike unto all Obedience. But of the Difference that is between *ſpiritual Gifts* and *ſaving Grace*, as alſo concerning their whole Nature and Uſe, I ſhall (God aſſiſting)

aſſiſting) treat at large in another *Diſcourſe*. At preſent I intend onely this Caution, that men Countenance not themſelves by them, nor Reſolve a *Peace* (or rather *Security*) into their *Exerciſe*, under real *ſpiritual Decayes* of Grace and Obedience.

Secondly, Too high an Eſtimation of any *peculiar Way* of *Worſhip* is apt to entice the *Minds* of ſome unto an *hurtfull Confidence* in theſe things. Having an Apprehenſion that they alone have attained unto the *Right Way* of *Goſpel-Worſhip*, and the Adminiſtration of its *Ordinances*, and that perhaps on ſuch Accounts, as wherein they are eminently *deceived*, they begin firſt greatly to *value themſelves*, and then to *deſpiſe* all *others*, and (if they can) to *perſecute* them. This inſenſibly works them unto a *truſt* in that which they eſteem ſo Excellent, and that unto an open Neglect of things of a greater weight and Moment. Thus is it not unuſual to ſee Perſons who are under the *power* of ſome ſingular Opinion and Practice in Religion, to make *one thing* almoſt their whole Buſineſs; the Meaſure of other things and Perſons, the Rule of Communion, and of all ſincere Love; to value and eſteem themſelves and others according

unto their Embracing or not Embracing of that Opinion. There is here ſomething of that which God complains of in the Prophet; *Iſa.* 65. 5. And it were to be wiſhed, that ſuch Principles and Practices were not viſibly accompanyed with a *Decay* of Love, Humility, Meekneſs, Self-diffidence, Condeſcenſion and Zeal in other things; ſeeing where it is ſo, let mens *outward Profeſſion* be what it will, the Plague of *Apoſtaſie* is begun. Wherefore, although we ought greatly to prize, and to endeavour after the true *Order* of the Church of Chriſt, the *Purity* of Worſhip and Regular *Adminiſtration* of Ordinances, yet let us take heed that we *prize not our ſelves* too much on what we have attained; For if we do ſo, we ſhall be very apt to countenance our ſelves in other Neglects thereby, which will certainly bring us into a ſpiritual *Sickneſs* and *Declenſion.* And one way or other there is an undue *Confidence* placed in theſe *outward Priviledges*, when either any or all of the things enſuing are found among us.

1. *A Neglect of private Duties.* This ruinous Event never falls out among Profeſſors, but it proceeds either from an

over-

over-fulneſs of the World and its Occaſions, or the *Prevalency* of ſome predominant Luſt, or a ſinfull *reſting* in or *truſting* unto the Duties of publick Worſhip; When all theſe concurre, (unleſs God Effectually awaken the Soul,) it is in a *periſhing Condition.* In particular, when men are ſatisfied, as unto *Religious Worſhip*, with that which is *publick* or in Communion with others, ſo as to countenance themſelves in a Neglect of the Duties of their *private Retirements*, they are in an high Road unto Apoſtaſie.

2. *The Indulgence of any private Luſt*, unto the *Satisfaction* of the *Fleſh.* This great Defect in the *power* of *Godlineſs*, is frequently countenanced by Strictneſs in the *form* thereof. And a great Effect it is of the *Deceitfulneſs of Sin*, when it can delude the Minds of men, to *juſtifie* themſelves in any one *Sin*, with the Names, Titles, Reputation, and Priviledges of the *Church*, or the *Ordinances*, whereof they are made Partakers; And the ſecret Efficacy of this Deceit is not eaſie to be detected.

3. It is ſo alſo when *a looſe and careleſs Frame* in our *Walking* is indulged unto on the ſame Account. It is hard in-

deed to know Directly whence this is come to pass, that so many Professors of the *Gospel* should give up themselves unto a negligent and careless *Walk*; but that it is so come to pass, is certain. There is no Truth more acknowledged than that *a strict and close Walk with God*, an Attendance thereunto on all Occasions with Diligence and Circumspection, with a continual conscientious Fear of *Sin*, is indispensibly required unto acceptable *Evangelical Obedience* or *Holiness*. Yet so it is, that many Professors walk with that Looseness and Carelessness, that venturous Boldness with respect unto the Occasions of Sinning, that Liberty or rather Licentiousness of Conversation, as are utterly inconsistent therewithall. As there are many Causes hereof, so I fear this may be one among them, that they too much satisfie themselves with their Interest in the *Church* and its *Priviledges*, and with their Observance of *publick Worship* and the *Ordinances* thereof, according to their respective Stations and Capacities.

Wherefore, the summe of this *Direction* is, That if we would be preserved from the *Prevalency* of the present *Apostasie*, we must have a strict Regard unto

our

our *Principles* and *Practice* with reſpect unto the Priviledges of the Church and Ordinances of *Goſpel-Worſhip*. If we *neglect* or *deſpiſe* them, we caſt off the *Yoke* of Chriſt, and have no ground to look for his Acceptance of us, or Concernment in us. It is but Folly for them to pretend an Hope in his *Mercy*, who deſie his *Authority*. And if (on the other hand) we ſo *reſt in them* as to countenance our ſelves in any of the Evils mentioned, we ſhall ſucceed into their Room, who under the Name and Pretence of the *Church* and its *Priviledges* fell into an open Apoſtaſie from *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel*. For, the ſame Cauſes will produce the ſame Effect in us as they did in them. There is a *Middle* Way between theſe *Extremes*, which who ſo are guided into, will find Reſt and Peace unto their Souls. And this is no other but an humble carefull conſcientious Improvement of them all unto their proper Ends. And it may not be amiſs to name ſome of thoſe things whereby we may know whether our Hearts are upright, and rightly diſpoſed in the uſe of *Goſpel-Ordinances*. And we may judge of our ſelves herein;

1. *If our Hearts are Bettered by them,*

or humbled for it if they are not. Their End with reſpect unto us, is to excite and put forth all Grace into Exerciſe. When therefore we find Faith and Love, Delight in God, longing after an Encreaſe of *Grace* and *Holineſs*; with a Deteſtation of *Sin*, Fruitfulneſs in *good Works* and all *Duties* of *Obedience*, Joy in *ſpiritual things*, Self-abaſement, and Admiration of *Grace*, ſtirred up in us by them; our Hearts need not Condemn us as to want of Sincerity in theſe Duties, though we are ſenſible of many Weakneſſes and Imperfections. And whereas through the Power of *Corruptions* and *Temptations*, through the Weakneſs of the *Fleſh*, and Prevalency of *Unbelief*, we come ſometimes ſhort of a ſenſible *Experience* of this Effect on our Souls by and under them, there may yet remain a relieving Evidence of ſome *Sincerity* in what we doe. And this is, if rejecting all other Pretences and Prejudices, we charge our ſelves alone with our *Unprofitableneſs*, and be humbled in a *ſenſe* thereof. Want hereof hath been the Reaſon why ſome have *rejected* the Ordinances of the Goſpel as *dead and uſeleſs*, and others have grown *formal*, *careleſs* and *barren* under the Enjoyment of them.

When

When all Vails and Coverings ſhall be taken away and deſtroyed, theſe things will appear to be the Fruits of *Pride*, and the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.

2. It is ſo when in the *Diſpenſation* of the Ordinances, *ſpiritual things are realized and made nigh unto us*. When in the Preaching of the Word we find Jeſus Chriſt *evidently ſet forth as crucified before our Eyes*; *Gal.* 3. 1. When the *form* of the things delivered is brought upon our *Minds*, *Rom.* 6. 17. When we doe as it were *feel* and *handle* the *Word of Life*, and the things hoped for have ſome kind of *ſubſiſtence* given them in our Souls, as *Heb.* 11. 1. then are we Exerciſed in a due manner in this part of our *Obedience*. To this purpoſe our Apoſtle diſcourſeth, *Rom.* 10. 6, 7, 8. The *Word* as preached and other Ordinances, do not direct us unto things *afar off*; but bring the Lord Chriſt with all the Benefits of his *Mediation* into our *Hearts*. But if we content our ſelves with *empty light*, with unaffecting Notions of *ſpiritual things*, if we reſt ſatisfied with the *outward Performance* of our own Duty and that of other Men, we have juſt cauſe to fear that our Harts are not

not Right in the ſight of God in this matter.

3. When we find that a *conſcientious attendance* on all the Ordinances of *Inſtituted Worſhip* doth *quicken our Diligence and Watchfulneſs unto all other Duties of Obedience that are required of us*, we are converſant in them in a *due manner*. When under a *pretence* of them, and a miſtaken *ſatisfaction* in them, men countenance themſelves in the *Neglect* of other Duties, how way is made for further Apoſtaſie from *Holineſs*, hath been declared. Wherefore there can be no greater Evidence of our due Attendance unto them, than when we are excited, quickened, enlarged and confirmed by them, unto, and in all the wayes of *univerſal Obedience*. Thoſe therefore who moſt *conſcientiouſly* make uſe of *Church-Priviledges* and *Goſpel-Ordinances*, are they whoſe Hearts are moſt engaged unto all other Duties by them.

Laſtly; It is an Evidence of the ſame Importance when we have that *Experience* of *Chriſt and his Grace* in the *Adminiſtration* of *Goſpel-Ordinances* according unto his Will, as that we are *ſtrengthened* hereby to *ſuffer for Him and them*, when

we

we are *called* thereunto. The Time will come when neither *meer Light* and *Conviction* of *Truth*, nor the *Gifts* of the *Miniſtry* will ſecure men unto their Profeſſion. But he who hath *taſted how Gracious* Chriſt is in the Wayes of his Appointment, will not eaſily be removed from his Reſolution of *following* Him whitherever he goeth.

Fourthly; *Take heed of the Infection of National Vices.* What I intend thereby, hath been before declared. And this Caution is moſt neceſſary when they are moſt *prevalent* among any People. For *Commonneſs* will take off a Senſe of their *Guilt*, and *Countenance* will inſenſibly take away *Shame.* Beſides, when ſome goe out unto an *open Exceſs*, others are apt to juſtifie themſelves in vain *Practices* and ſinful *Miſcarriages*, becauſe they riſe not up unto the ſame height of Provocations with them. This makes leſſer Vanities in Habits, Attires, Pleaſures, Miſpence of Time in *Talking-Houſes*, Exceſs in Eating and Drinking, corrupt Communication and careleſs Boldneſs in common Converſes, whereby Perſons tread in the Steps, and ſometimes on the very Heels of the predominant Sins of the

the *Place* and *Age*, ſo to abound among us. Some openly ſhew what they have a Mind to be at, if they durſt; and that it is more *Reputation* and the Power of *Convictions*, than the Love of *Goſpel-Holineſs* that reſtrains them from running forth into *the ſame Exceſs of Riot* with others. *Iſrael* of Old dwelt alone, and was not numbred among the Nations. And *the Remnant of Jacob* is to be ſo in *the midſt*, in the *bowels* of many People, as to be a *Bleſſing* unto them, *Mic.* 5. 8. not to be *corrupted* by them. If Profeſſors will ſo immerſe themſelves into the Body of the People as inſenſibly to learn their *Manners*, they will be carried down the ſtream with them into Perdition. And the *Danger* hereof is beyond what moſt men conceive. Grace was but *ſparingly* adminiſtred unto the Community of the People under the *Old Teſtament*. And therefore after Giving of the Law, God would not truſt them to live among other People, nor other People to live among them, as knowing how unable they were to withſtand the *Temptations* of *Conformity* unto them. Hereon he appointed that all the Nations ſhould be utterly *extirpated* where they were to inhabit,

inhabit, that *they ſhould not learn their Cuſtoms*, *Lev.* 18. 30. The Neglect of this *Wiſdom* of God, the Tranſgreſſion of his *Will* herein, by mixing themſelves with other Nations, and learning their *Manners*, was that which proved their *Ruine*. Under the Goſpel there is a more *plentifull Effuſion* of the *Spirit*; God now entruſts all that are called unto the *Obedience* of it, to live in the *midſt of all Nations* under Heaven; Yet he ſo doth it, as to warn them of their *Danger* thereby, and to require them to ſtand upon their *Guard* herein continually. This is that part of *true Religion* which the Apoſtle *James* calls the *keeping of our ſelves unſpotted from the World*, Chap. 1. 27. Moſt men think it enough, that no more can be required of them nor expected from them, than that they *wallow not* in the Mire and Pollutions of it. If their *Practice* be free from *Actual open ſins*, they care not what *ſpots* of a *Worldly Converſation* are upon them; but they know not what will be the End thereof.

It may be it will be ſaid, that unleſs we do conform *our ſelves* in ſome things unto the *Cuſtoms* that are prevalent among us,

us, as in *Habit* and *Faſhion*, and way of *Converſe*, we ſhall be deſpiſed in the World, and neither we nor ours be of any regard.

I anſwer, (1) That I am not contending about *ſmall things*, nor preſcribing *Modes of Attire*, or Manner of *Deportment* unto any. There is none who doth more deſpiſe the placing of Religion in *Cloaths*, in *Geſtures*, in the Refuſal of Civil and juſt *Reſpects*, than I doe; Nor have I any Severity in my Thoughts againſt a *Diſtinction* in theſe things among Perſons according to their *Degrees* and *Conditions* in the World, though apparently there be an *Exceſs* in all ſorts herein. But that which I intend, is, a *Complyance* with the World in thoſe things which *border on*, and make ſome kind of *Repreſentation* of the predominant *Vices* of the *Place* and *Age* wherein we live. And if you think you ſhall be *deſpiſed* if you come behind the reſt of your Rank and Quality in the World in theſe things, ſtill you will be ſo unleſs you come up unto them in all *Abominations*, 1 *Pet.* 4. 34. and whether it be fit to relinquiſh *God* and *Chriſt* and the *Goſpel*, all *Holineſs* and *Morality*, to have the *Friendſhip of the World*, judge ye.

ye. And, (2) Be ſure to outgoe them in *fixed Honeſty*, *Kindneſs*, *Benignity*, *Uſefulneſs*, *Meekneſs*, *Moderation of Spirit*, *Charity*, *Bowels of Compaſſion*, *Readineſs to help and relieve all men* according unto your Power, and you will quickly find, (even in this World,) how little you are concerned in that *Contempt* of the *vileſt* part of Mankind, whereof you ſeem to be afraid.

Fifthly, Carefully avoyd all thoſe *Miſcarriages of Profeſſors* which *alienate* the *Minds* of men from the *Goſpel*, and *countenance* them in the Contempt of the *Profeſſion* of it. Some of them we have mentioned before, and many of the like Nature might be added unto them. As the ſcandalous profligate *Lives* of thoſe in General who are called *Chriſtians*, gives that Offence unto *Jews*, *Muhumetans* and *Gentiles* all the World over, that *hardens* them unto a Contempt and Deteſtation of *Chriſtianity*, and hath brought the whole Matter of *Religion* in the World unto *Force* and the *Sword*; ſo the Miſcarriages of the *ſtricteſt ſort of Profeſſors* do greatly countenance others in their Diſlike of, and Enmity againſt the *power* of

of *Godlineſs*, which they profeſs. And ſo far as we *continue* in them, we have a ſhare in the Guilt of the preſent *Defection*. Not to inſiſt on Particulars; the things of this Nature that are charged on them, may be reduced unto three Heads.

(1) Want of *Love* and *Unity* among themſelves.

(2) Want of *Uſefulneſs* and *Kindneſs* towards all.

(3) *Spiritual Pride* and *Cenſoriouſneſs*, or raſh *judging* of other Men.

Theſe are the things which are commonly charged on ſome *Profeſſors*. And although (it may be) they are but *few* who are guilty of all or any of theſe things, at leaſt not as they are charged and *reproached* by others, yet they may all learn *what* in an eſpecial manner to avoyd, that they give no Advantage unto thoſe who *ſeek* for it, and would be *glad* of it; It is our Duty by a watchfull holy Converſation in all things to *put to ſilence the Ignorance of fooliſh men*, and ſo univerſally to approve our *Sincerity* unto God and Men, that whereas we are, or may be at any time Evil-ſpoken of as *Evil-doers*, they may be *aſhamed*, be-

beholding our *good Converſation* in Chriſt, and *glorifie* God in the *day of Viſitation*. This is the Law that we have brought our ſelves under, not to frett and fume, and in our Minds ſeek for *Revenge*, when we are traduced and Evil ſpoken of; but by a *patient continuance in Well-doing*, to overcome all the Evil that the Malice of Hell or the World can caſt upon us. And if we like not this *Law* and *Rule*, we had beſt Relinquiſh our *Profeſſion*, for it is indiſpenſibly required of all the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt. And he whoſe Heart is confirmed by Grace *to doe well* whileſt he is *Evil-ſpoken of*, will find that preſent Satisfaction in a ſenſe of his Acceptation with Chriſt, as to make him ſay, *This Yoke is eaſie, and this Burden light*. Eſpecially ought we carefully to avoyd the things mentioned and Appearances of them, whereby publick Offence is taken, and Advantage made by Evil men to countenance themſelves in their Sins. You are but *few* unto whom theſe things are communicated, and ſo may judge that all your Care in and about about them, will be of little ſignificancy to put any ſtop unto the General *Declenſion* from *Goſpel-Holineſs*. But it is

hoped that all others are warned in the ſame manner, yea and more effectually than you are; However, every Veſſel muſt ſtand on its *own bottom*; the *Juſt ſhall live* by his *own Faith*; every *one of us muſt give an account of himſelf unto God*, and no more is required of you but your own *perſonal Duty*.

It is true, you cannot put an End unto thoſe *Differences* and *Diviſions*, that Want of *Love* and *Agreement* that is among *Profeſſors*. But you may take care that the *Guilt* of none of theſe things may be juſtly charged on *you*. Love unto the Saints without Diſſimulation, Readineſs to bear in Meekneſs with different Apprehenſions and palpable Miſapprehenſions, not intrenching on the *Foundation*, freedom from Impoſing your *Sentiments* on thoſe who cannot receive them, and from *judging raſhly* on ſuppoſed Failures, Readineſs for *univerſal Communion* in all Religious Duties with all that *love the Lord Jeſus Chriſt in Sincerity*; as they are our *Duties*, as they are ſome of the principal Wayes whereby we may truely Repreſent the *Lord Chriſt* and the Doctrine of the *Goſpel* unto others; ſo they will *diſarm* Sathan and the World

of

of a *great Engine* whereby they work no ſmall *Miſchief* unto the whole *Intereſt* of Religion.

Again; were all Profeſſors *meek*, *quiet*, *peaceable* in their Societies and among their Neighbours, *ſober*, *temperate*, *humble* in their perſonal Converſation in the World, *uſefull*, *kind*, *benign*, *condeſcending* towards all, *chearfull* in Trials and Afflictions, alwayes *rejoycing in the Lord*; Men not given up to a *reprobate ſenſe*, (who are not to be regarded,) would at length be ſo far from taking *Offence* at them, as to judge that they ſhould not know what to doe *without them*, and be won to endeavour a *Conformity* unto them. In like manner, were thoſe *Rules* more diligently attended, which are preſcribed unto all Believers, as unto their *Converſation* in this World, it would be of no ſmall Advantage unto *Religion*. See *Phil.* 4. 8. 1 *Pet.* 2. 12. 2 *Cor.* 13. 7. *Rom.* 13. 12, 13. 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11, 12. *Heb.* 13. 18. Did Honeſty, Sincerity, Uprightneſs in all Occaſions of Life, in the whole Converſe of *Profeſſors* in the World, ſhine more brightly, and give more *Evidences* of themſelves than at preſent among many they ſeem to doe, it would undoubtedly turn

unto the unſpeakable Advantage of Religion.

And laſtly, for that *judging* or *condemning of others*, wherewith they are ſo *provoked*, there is but one way whereby it may be done, ſo as to give no juſt Offence; And this is in our *Lives*. The Practice of *Holineſs* judgeth all *unholy Perſons* in their own Breaſts. And if they are *provoked* thereby, there is nothing in it but a *new Aggravation* of their own *Sin* and *Impiety*.

FINIS.

4 JA 55

Reader, by reaſon of the Printers haſte in this Work, theſe following ERRATA's *have eſcaped, which thou art deſired thus to correct with thy Pen.*

PAge 19. line 27. dele *that*, p. 23. l. 1. for *they* r. *men*, ibid. l. 6. after *required* dele , : p. 26. l. 3. after *Efficacy* inſert *ſo as that it*, ibid. l. 13. r. *others*, p. 30. l. 6. for ȳ r. *in*, p. 303. l. 19. for *hopeleſs* r. *uſeleſs*, p. 304. l. 25. for *hearkening* r. *hankering*, p. 394. l. 13, 14. r. *Uſe of the Mediation and Blood of Chriſt*, p. 478. l. 20. r. *than of*, p. 513. l. 14. for *he* r. *Chriſt*, ibid. l. 25. r. *reject them*, p. 520. l. 2. r. *ſuch viſible*, p. 523. l. 1, 2. r. *Reaſons of their Confidences and Fears*, p. 524. l. 22. r. *Adverſaries*, p. 526. l. 19. r. *into a*.